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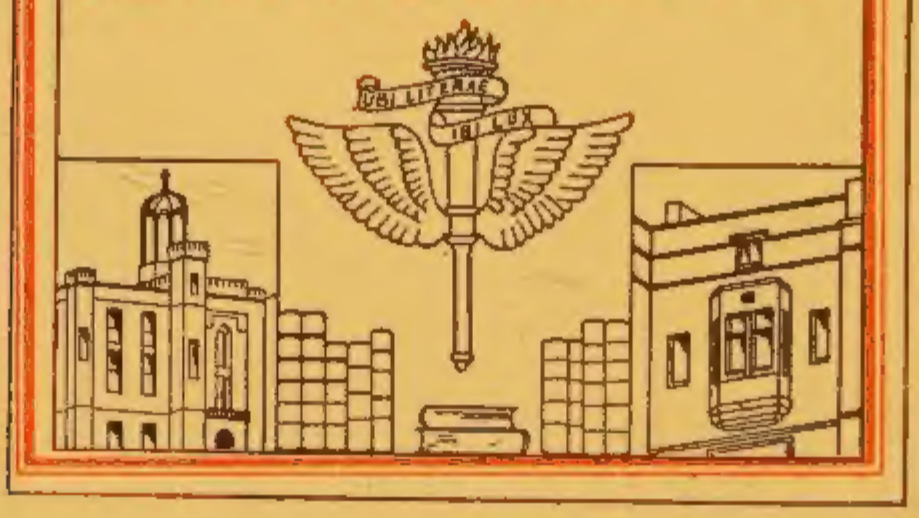

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WAITING FOR THE VERDICT.

Designed by W. J. Hennessy.

"SHE WOULD BE A WOMAN SOME DAY."—

WAITING FOR THE VERDICT.

BY MRS. R. H. DAVIS,

AUTHOR OF "LIFE IN THE IRON MILLS," "MARGRET HOWTH," ETC.

"How will you be tried?"
"By God and the Country."
"God send you a good deliverance."

THE GREGG PRESS
UPPER SADDLE RIVER, N.J.

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AMERICAN NOVELS OF MUCKRAKING, PROPAGANDA, AND SOCIAL PROTEST

The United States has suffered quite a few spells of sickness, if one may judge by the long and varied procession of novels dealing with the ills of its society. As each generation has sought assurances for the social hope that springs eternal in a democracy, muckraking, propagandizing, and advocating reforms have been not only implicit in partisan politics but also germane to literary production. While it has been said that Americans are readier to believe in charlatans than in utopias, there remains a sneaking feeling that maybe Oscar Wilde was right when he remarked: "Progress is the realization of utopias." Some such moral if indeed moral it be–may be derived from the Gregg series of "American Novels of Muckraking, Propaganda, and Social Protest."

One purpose underlying the selection of the titles in the series is to provide examples of socio-economic novels which are presently out of print but which are nevertheless important in showing the history of the genre, a topic so far treated by historians only sporadically. Most of these works can rarely be found in the original editions; and many were printed on paper which is beginning to shatter. The series should prove a boon to librarians and to scholars who work in the fields of literary history and the social sciences. Its usefulness as supplementary reading for college courses in American studies and social history speaks for itself.

In turning the pages of the novels we begin with the groping 1830's and the fabulous 40's–when, as Emerson put it, every man in New England was running around with a plan for reorganizing society in his vestpocket. And we end with the "Era of the Muckrakers"–when the long-existent fervor to remake the world nearer to the mind's desire became a contagious fever, and phrases were bandied about like "frenzied finance," "conspicuous consumption," "malefactors of great wealth," "how the other half lives" and "the shame of the cities." In this series we find artifacts from the days following the panic of 1837, when Horace Greeley devoted a regular column in his *Tribune* to the kind of "associationism" that overtook Brook Farm; and we come along to the period early in the present century when the "yellow" journalism of Hearst and Pulitzer reached full flower and young Sinclair

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Lewis swept the floors of Helicon Hall, the socialist community supported by Upton Sinclair with the profits of *The Jungle*. That was the epoch when the young intellectuals stormed college halls to hear Jack London expound the principles of socialism. In between, we find specimens emanating from the Gilded Age, with the ensuing clamor against business combinations eventuating in the Sherman Anti-Trust Act of 1890, and the agricultural depression that aroused Midwestern farmers to "raise less corn and more hell" or to align themselves with the People's Party. Business panics in 1873 and 1893 stirred up the coals, young preachers discovered the social gospel, bewhiskered anarchists were the chief "reds," strikes became for the first time a matter of wide public concern, and the play based on *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was the best money-maker on the stage.

One of the features of the list is a careful selection of works concerned with the Negro. The earliest is *The Slave*, by the historian Richard Hildreth. It was not only the first fully developed antislavery novel, but a pattern-maker for the many subsequent tales presenting the chief character as a light-skinned mulatto. The Russians translated it in the 1950's. Another is Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Dred*, a sequel to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and perhaps more cogent propaganda. The idea that the Negro is constitutionally unable to cope with American society is curiously set forth in *Liberia*, by Sarah J. Hale, a staunch Yankee best known for her verses about Mary and her little lamb Mrs. Hale was propagandizing for solving the slavery problem by returning the Negroes to Africa. Presenting the Southern side, *Aunt Phillis's Cabin*, by Mary H. Eastman, has been chosen from the batch of novels which sought in vain to counter the effect of Mrs. Stowe's world-famed classic of protest. The blasting of Northern prejudice against the Negro after the Civil War is well illustrated in two works. Rebecca Harding Davis's *Waiting for the Verdict*, a title still apt a century after it first appeared, and Albion W Tourgée's tract for the times *Pactolus Prime*, which vitriolically scores the essential prejudice of white against black and is, apparently, the first American novel dealing with the Negro problem with a setting in Washington, D. C.

Joaquin Miller's *Life Amongst the Modocs* deals with the mistreatment of Indians. Few in number but judiciously chosen for illustrative purposes are stories exposing the white slave traffic

from the days when the Mann Act was legislated and city slums were being muckraked both in and out of fiction to a degree probably more thorough than is the case even today. Among the other problems considered in these stories are divorce, prisons, and the criminal code, political corruption, pacificism, states rights, the social responsibilities of the churches, the plight of the Jew and the Immigrant, and even medical frauds.

But the theme governing the largest single element in this collection is the business tycoon and the battle between the capitalist power elite and the working class. The range in the picturization of "the typical American figure," as Henry James declared the captain of industry to be, runs quite a gamut in the series, from the romantic treatment in *Sevenoaks*, by the first editor of *Scribner's Magazine*, to the excoriation of corporation machinations by avowed socialists not unacquainted with Karl Marx. The tycoons pilloried range from bankers, real estate promoters, mill owners, and railroad magnates to lumber barons. One might view the development of this theme in the amazing profusion of fictional examples as a symbol of the growing unrest precipitated in a traditionally agrarian society bewildered by its confrontation with huge industrial corporations and big cities. But possibly it proves no more than the homely wisdom distilled into the humorist's wisecrack: "We have met the enemy and the enemy is us!"

PROFESSOR CLARENCE GOHDES
Duke University
Durham, North Carolina

September, 1968

REBECCA HARDING DAVIS

Rebecca Harding Davis was born in Washington, Pennsylvania, in 1831, the daughter of Richard Harding and Rachel Leet (Wilson) Harding. As a child, she lived in Alabama and in Wheeling, West Virginia. Self-educated, she began to write at a very early age, and managed to get some short stories published in ephemeral "little magazines." In 1861, she began to receive recognition, when her articles appeared in *The Atlantic Monthly*, then under the brilliant editorial direction of J. T. Fields. In 1863 she married L. Clarke Davis, and the couple went to Philadelphia, where they remained for the greater part of their lives. In spite of the cares and responsibilities of raising a large family (she was the mother of Richard Harding Davis) she continued to write prolifically. From 1869 to 1875 Mrs. Davis was associate editor of the New York *Tribune*. She died at Mt. Kisco, New York, in 1910.

Mrs. Davis was the first American author to introduce the labor question into fiction. A harshly realistic writer, she once said: "I want you to hide your disgust, take no heed to your clean clothes, and come right down with me - here into the thickest of the fog and mud and effluvia." Her muckraking article "Life in the Iron Mills," which appeared in the *Atlantic* in 1861, made her famous. This was followed by the novel *Margaret Howth*, a study of slum life, which tells the story of a struggling young manufacturer who chooses a poor working girl rather than an heiress. This book, though frequently marred by the sort of melodrama and sentimentality which make passages in Dickens unreadable, is nevertheless an accurate depiction of the industrial hell which existed in America a hundred years ago, a pioneering work which foreshadowed Stephen Crane and Dreiser.

Waiting for the Verdict appeared in 1868, the beginning of the era of "Black Reconstruction" in the Southern states, the period when that defeated nation was to suffer its greatest humiliations and the question of what to do with millions of freed slaves was foremost in the minds of Northerners and Southerners alike. And the more thoughtful Americans began to ask themselves: "What sort of being is the Negro - what are his feelings and beliefs? Does he possess the same intellectual potential-

ities as the white? Should he be allowed an equal place in middle-class society?" And so on. Judging from the enormous number of books and articles published today on that subject, the problem has not been resolved.

In any case, Mrs. Davis, always a pioneer and a crusader, leaped into the fray with a novel dealing with a subject that still strikes terror into the hearts of the "respectable": miscegenation. *Waiting for the Verdict* (we are still waiting, and a century has passed) explores the dilemmas which beset an eminent Philadelphia surgeon, a man well established in white upper middle-class society, when he reveals that he is part Negro. (If this plot sounds familiar, it is because it was used by Sinclair Lewis in *Kingsblood Royal.*)

"John Broderip is the son of a negro; there is not one of his hospitals or patients today [*sic*] would open their doors to him; there is not a club, church, theatre or restaurant from which he would not be ejected like a felon, the academies of science or art, where he was a director, would admit him only if he came as the servant of a white child. If he married there would be no citizenship for him, no honor for his wife, no education for his children." A classical summation of the attitudes which prevailed until very recently.

Waiting for the Verdict is essentially a work of social protest and propaganda for the Negro, and as a result tends to be didactic. Nevertheless, there is some excellent characterization, and the reactions of the good citizens of Philadelphia to the scandal over the doctor's "tainted" blood are described with quite a bit of psychological shrewdness.

Upper Saddle River, N. J.
October, 1968

F. C. S.

To my friend, who is a friend to all the weak and wronged among God's creatures, they owe the few words which he urged me to write on their behalf.

R. H. D.

Aug. 27, 1867.

WAITING FOR THE VERDICT.

CHAPTER I.

OVER THE FERRY.

A NOVEMBER day, twenty years ago. A chilly, pale, weak-breathed, deadening day everywhere; up where the sun glimmered feebly along through a cold, watery sky: yonder, where the sea yawned to the horizon like lead: up the bay where the water moodily lapped the beach, while pink gentians and saffron weeds mildewed and rotted in the salt hay of the marshes.

Nothing had life in it but a frosty air, which, as afternoon came on, drove up the Delaware, nipping and sharp; it found the great flat Quaker City locked in by the two lazy rivers, going off into a sleep, as it always did on the first hint of night, like a ship becalmed in a fog. Inside of the houses there were a million of centres of heat, or love, or passion, but they all turned the same decorous, impassive red and white faces to the pavement. Down on the wharves, as twilight approached, the piled blocks of importers' warehouses, dark, steep, white-shuttered, stared over the hucksters' wagons, swarming at their feet in the shadow; chilly lines of bare

masts shivered in the wind over the uncouth bulky vessels hugging the shore for warmth, for miles.

All the dreariness and dankness of the day grew dankest and dreariest at the close of it. The keen wind tore and grated its way through chinks and crannies. Even the boards of the ferry-boat began to creak and crack with the frost, though there was a Maine lumberman on one side, and a lime brig on the other, wedging and warming her between their great hulks, which threw ponderous shadows far up the wharf.

Josh McNabb, the little ferry man, after bobbing about in these shadows, rolling trucks and baskets aboard, dived down into his cubby-hole of a cabin to light a smoky oil-lamp, and pulling on his overcoat, and coming out, heartened himself by a look across at the upper windows over the tin shop on Race Street, where a sconce, hung over the red half-curtains, showed that Jane had the pepper-pot and coffee, piping hot for him. One more run, and he could turn off before night.

There were but few passengers; a little apple-cheeked woman, coarsely dressed as a Quaker; a mulatto boy, lying on his back on some barrels tussling with a dog; and his master, a thin, subdued gentleman who sat in a chair, tilted back, smoking, and keeping a steady watch on the streets abutting on the wharf.

"A country parson come up to town," Josh thought, "or else," spitting knowingly, "a leg. A regular leg. Well gotten up."

Whenever he passed he scrutinized the man after that with a policeman's eye; the high velvet-collared overcoat and trousers he wore were of dust-colored cloth, new, but old-fashioned from having been long laid away; his head was bald on top, a thin fringe of red hair and whiskers framing a sandy-skinned face, the features of which had never been compacted together by any definite meaning; round, lightish eyes looked through a pair of spectacles at Josh, at the dull town, and the inhospitable air, with a polite and deprecating smile.

When he turned his head, still looking uneasily up the wharf, the Quakeress called to him with a surprised chuckle of a laugh, something between a chirrup and a hen's cluck, "Jeems Strebling, is it thee, or thee sperrit?"

The gentleman threw away his cigar, got up and came to her, his hat in his hand, his eyes going gravely over the pudding-shaped little body and doll's face with its dancing blue eyes.

"Miss Yates! Ann Yates! This is -positively this is—!" with a shallow laugh. "Yours is the first familiar face since I left Alabama," bending over it with assumed rapt attention. "It makes me young again—yes."

"Young again? How's that? Eh, how's that?" sharply. "Thee's well kept, Jeems; while I'm scrubby, and shabby and

gray-haired," jerking back the scuffed bonnet from her frowsy white hair with the same little chuckle.

"Well, well, well! I'm an old hack, friend Ann; an old hack. Consider, it's twenty years. But," with a sudden exaggerated sprightliness, "when I see the spirit in your eyes, I feel that I have found the fabled fountain of youth. I feel—"

"Yes," dryly. "Thee used to carry a good supply of feeling about with thee, Jeems. Like Turnagon's ointment, 'warranted to suit all cases.' Thee's not altered, I think," with a shrewd, quick scanning of his face.

"And you?" with a bow, while he looked anxiously over her head at the dusky streets.

"No, I'm Ann Yates still," tying her bonnet with a natty little bow. "I'm that goose without feathers, or crab without a shell—a Friend without money. But the Lord provides—provides."

"Times have been rough, then?"

"Only when I tried to earn my own bread and salt. I've taught in my day, and lectured, and scribbled for the 'Liberator.' But I am not a self-supporting agent. Once that I had made up my mind to that, I put myself to higher work. Our society is a pioneer in the world's progress, thee knows, and while it is clearing the land, Ann Yates can grub, if nothing else. Grub. The victuals come. Sometimes in the shape of corn-bread and apple-sauce, week in and out. But they come. He takes care of that."

He adjusted his hat, but said nothing. Every man has a religion of his own, and Strebling did not fancy hearing his God, who was known to him through the music in the chapel, and some vague grand notions of His old dealings with the Jews, degraded into a purveyor of apple-sauce for this leaky-brained Yankee old maid.

"What's thee been doing, Jeems? I've seen thee name in Congress. Serving thee country?"

"According to my lights," smiling, good humoredly. "On the other side from yours."

"Yes? Thee's had a wife? And children?"

"I lost Mrs. Strebling several years ago; she was one of the Jarratts, of Kentucky. But I have a boy, I thought I had told you. Bob is eight years old, now," a quick, pleasant laugh in his face, and a sudden color.

"Ta—ta," slowly scanning his face again, "I've heard it said that the Messiah comes to everybody. I'd like, Jeems, to see thee boy."

"Yes. I've been bringing Bob some trifles," pulling out a small watch. "Do you like this, now? It's Lupin's. The seals are flashy, but it is for a boy's taste, you know," turning the glittering trifles over and over in his hand. "It's a thing Bob needs—a watch."

"No doubt," looking at him with a quizzical, sad smile, "I've had but little to do with children. Thee never had but one?"

Strebling put the watch in its case, and coiled the chain about it. Then he dropped it into his pocket, slowly looking up.

"Never but the one? No. Never but the one." He turned the uneasy, frightened look again to the wharf, where the scattered groups grew dim in the twilight.

"What's thee here for, Jeems? Whew! this wind has a snap in it!" getting up, and marching up and down, with a mannish, clipping step, her fat hands clasped behind her round, little body, her chin perked out. "What's thee here for? Just to look back a bit, heh? Unrolling Clotho's ball of yarn, I call it. Well, that's hearty. It does old fellows like us good to smell the air of our youth if it was raw, like a foggy morning. So thee came all the way from Alabama for that? Peeping in the chinks at thee old boy's play-ground? Well, well, that boy of thine would keep thee nearer to thee youth. But I never had a child. Never will," passing her forefinger thoughtfully over her eyebrow, again and again, as she walked.

"The boy's old play-ground? Yes, that is it," said Strebling, taking off his hat, and settling it on his head, nervously preparing to go back to his seat. While she shook hands, chirruped and clucked about him, keeping the shrewd, blue eyes on his, his face suddenly looked as if he had found the boy's old play-ground, full of damp, unclean ghosts enough.

Yet all that he saw was an old man and a child coming through the dusky cold across the wharf. One on each side of the great Conestoga wagon, with its lumbering canvas top swaying from side to side, and team of eight roadsters, each with his chime of bells arched over his back. Strebling, when it came fairly in front of him, drew himself back, growing yellow under his jaws; he took off his spectacles, as if to dim the sight; he took snuff, he rubbed his cold hands together. You would have thought that some dead woman or man freed from the grave, for only that minute, was struggling to reach him from behind the drover's red face, or to speak in his ponderous Whoas, and Gees. He went back stealthily to where the bow of the boat pawed up and down in the muddy water, and stood shivering in the clammy fog off of the river.

There never was anything less uncanny or ghostly than the hurly-burly they made in getting that wagon on board; in fact, there never was anything more wide-awake or jolly than the whole turn-out. Any child along the Pennsylvania mountain roads could have told you there were no beasts better fed, or sleeker haired than Joe Burley's; and every bell on their backs had a special cheery ring of its own. Nothing of the ghost in little Ross Burley, trotting about, watching the operation, with a square basket of herbs on

each arm, just as her grandfather had picked her up from her stall in the Pine Street Market. Marketing was dull work for Ross. When she had hung her bunches of sage and thyme behind her, the fun was over.

"Two for five pennies;" or, "Seasoning for your capon, sir?" was as much as she said. Generally, she went to sleep. Old Scheffer, the butcher, would laugh when this happened, and sell her herbs for her; he never woke her up.

To-day, however, some fish-brine had been slopped over her bench, and Scheffer's boy jeered at her whenever she put her head out. So, being a cleanly little thing, with a dogged temper of her own, she had cried instead of sleeping, tasting the tears to see how salt they were.

Suddenly the market was filled with the sound of bells, as if a holiday had broken loose in the air, and there, at the end of the street, was the great Conestoga. The sun shining on its broad, red body, and white tent-top, and the swinging trough underneath, and the dog Brouse, and her grandfather, looking somehow like one of Scheffer's sirloins of beef. Then everybody looked, and laughed, and nodded at her, and Scheffer's boy told her to "look alive!" and jumped about, sorting and packing her herbs.

Ross walked off beside the wagon, proud and swelling as a pouter pigeon. The fact was, boarding about, from one alley to another, she never had had a home like other children. Nor mother; just Joe and the wagon. She was used to see people crowd about it. The hucksters in the market, as here at the Ferry. "How was beef in Berks?" "Would poultry be down before Christmas?" etc. The great clean, stately wagon, with its train of horses, its music, its smell of far-off fields and dairies, was a different affair, rumbling through the city streets, from the pert little cabs and stages slying around it. No wonder everybody looked after it with queer and friendly smiles. But what did they know of the wagon? Josh, the ferry man, might bustle about it as he pleased, and even know the trick of dropping the canvas, but Ross had crossed the great snowy mountains on it, more than once. While they were pulling, and shouting, and swearing, to bring the horses on board, she stood near to Strebling, thinking of the snug little kitchen inside, where she had cooked, and her bedroom in the sweet-smelling hay, and her tiny house up by Joe's high seat, where he told her stories all the Winter's day until night fell, as they plodded through the solitary forests and black hills glowering closer on either side, while the bells chimed in front, and the backs of the horses grew dim in the thick falling snow. She hugged herself with a snug sense of possession. It was nothing but a wagon to Josh, and she was glad of it.

Meanwhile he and her grandfather were at work with their sleeves rolled up.

"Them dog-goned critters," Joe said, "'ud balk at this boat, if 'twas ther last gasp."

Sap, the mulatto boy on the deck, plunged into the midst of them with a shrill "whoop!" He was a born hostler, that was plain; so long as he slapped their haunches, dabbed at their necks, swarmed over them like a katydid on a log, they pricked up their ears and made headway.

"Well done, boy!" called out Ann Yates, at which the lad gave a piping yell, and worked until the veins in his neck swelled. It set his blood boiling with pleasure to be noticed by the white folks. When wagon and horses were on board, he found Ross playing with his dog, and stood, with his hands in his pockets, laughing all over, opening and shutting his mouth without making a sound. Mr. Strebling came near, looking down at the water swashing up against the sides of the boat.

"I never saw a better dog than this," said Ross, with a grave little nod to the white man.

"Him's name's Luff," said Sap, "Ya! Luff! He's my dog. Me and Kunnel Strebling hyur, fetched him from Alabama."

"I wish he was mine, then," said Ross. "I wish you would stand off," in her shrill little voice to Sap. The dirty yellow skin of the mulatto made her sick, she was sure; it was the same as if a toad or snake had stood upright, to see his grimaces and monkey tricks of delight at being kindly spoken to. She wished he was dead, and out of the way on the boat, and was sure that, if she had been a boy, she would have thrown the yellow, grinning thing into the water.

"Go off! They want you at the horses again," with a domineering nod. Sap only drew back, watching her with a sullen, jealous scowl, as she "wrestled" with the dog. There was a good deal of the material of the man in Ross's little body; her quiet little face grew red, and she lost her breath, in hol ling the big brute down; she was determined that the beast should know that she was stronger than he. When she thought that he knew it, and lay with his jaws between his fore paws on her knees, she patted his neck, and put her arms about it.

"He's a very good dog, I think," she said to Mr. Strebling.

"Ah? the dog? What's your name, now? What did you say your name was, my child?" in a cowed, frightened way, passing his hand rapidly over his foxy bit of moustache as he spoke.

"Ross, Rosslyn Comly," with a sober, surprised look.

"Comly? You're a blue-eyed girl, Rosslyn, hey? No? Brown? And yellow hair? Yel-low hair," beating a tattoo with his silver pencil on his square, white teeth, his gray eyes set and watery behind his spectacles, as if the dead face had succeeded in coming very near, indeed.

Ross never had been scanned so keenly before. "It is yellow," the little girl said, and as she was a thorough woman, though yet in the calyx, she looked down, hot to her feet, with sharp shame and guilt in that her nose was a snub, and that there were no eyebrows as yet on her freckled face, worth mentioning.

"And you sit in the market? Selling herbs, and radishes—yes? My black people sit in the market"—

The boat was under way; it was growing darker; nobody saw him as he caught the little red, rough hand under the dog's shaggy hide, holding it tightly a moment.

"God help me!" said James Strebling.

Then he caught a whiff of the fish-brine on her frock, and dropped the hand, putting his glove on his own, which shook like a drunkard's, as he walked away. "It is a most unpleasant odor—that from the markets," he said to the Quakeress. (It was noticeable that he stood at ease again when talking to her.) "An unusual combination in this little girl's face, eh? brown eyes and clear, yellow hair."

"Um—yes. There's a good deal of outcome in the face," looking at Ross through her half shut eyes as if she had been a curious beetle.

"Mrs. Strebling had a strong antipathy to yellow hair. I used to wish to bring home—a little girl. But if she had looked like this one, now, Mrs. Strebling would not have tolerated her. It would have been a hell upon earth for the child."

Ann Yates continued to patrol the deck with him, thinking that twenty years inside of the fences of his plantation had starved poor Jeems Strebling's brain to inanition. Meanwhile, he stopped once and again near Ross, talking to her, the mulatto lounging near to listen. One thing, Mr. Strebling said: "I mean to be a good friend to you, child. It is not my fault if I have been late," looking over her head, into the muddy depth of river fog and the scattered red sparks of light along shore, as though there was another than the child before whom he pleaded not guilty. Stepping off with the Quakeress again, he stiffened his lean, padded body complacently, as if an approving conscience within cried, Bravo. There was a wide gap, he knew, between the little herb-girl, with her briny smells, and the easy-going planter, half of whose days were spent with the rare old dramatists of Anne's time, and the other half on the race-course. But he had crossed it, and she was grateful, doubtless.

Ross was pulling the dog about, contriving a saddle for him, now that he was hers. Sap came in front of her, standing erect. "He's my dog, Luff," his sullen face sharpening savagely, as he spoke to the "poor white trash."

"I gave him to the girl just now," said the colonel, carelessly, in passing. Ross laughed tauntingly, glad that she was white, and

stronger than this yellow monster of a boy; except a pet fox of her grandfather's and Scheffer's boy, she never had hated anything so much before; never. She put her foot on the dog's neck, just to vex him. Luff licked her hand.

Sap stood quite still a moment, then he went to his master, following him, step by step, cringing, his stealthy, dangerous eye on his face, his tones unusually clear:

"Mars' Jeems, Luff kent go. He's mine." Coming closer, the voice sharper and more wiry, when there was no answer, "Luff's not one of the Strebling dogs, Kunnel. He wur a pup of Cap'n Grant's as had the distemper, and Cap'n, he give him to me. 'Hyur, Sap,' he says. I've nussed him dese two years; he's well, now. He's mine."

Mr. Strebling would have passed on, shaking off the fellow with a lazy look of annoyance, but the Quakeress stopped to look at him.

"Well, well, boy, suppose the dog your's—though it's plain it's a lie hatched up to trip me. You shall be paid for it. Leave the girl alone."

"You'll give it to her, Mas'r Jeems?"

Strebling looked at him. Something in the gleam of the light-gray eye made the mulatto cower back.

Ross stood up, her face burning. "The dog is not yours," she said to Mr. Strebling, fierce as a little game pullet. "The black boy is not so mean as you. Be gone!" driving Luff from her

Strebling stroked his beard delightedly at the blaze of temper "It's a sign of good blood," nodding knowingly to Ann Yates "The dog shall not belong to Sap again, my good girl."

"Mars' Jeems never goes back of his word," laughed the mulatto, shrilly.

"No. I never do."

As the Quakeress and his master passed the boy from time to time, they saw him standing quite quiet, his hand on the dog's head, looking out steadily into the river, not conscious that they were near him. Ross had gone over to her grandfather, sturdily turning her back on them.

"But Luff is her's, boy," snapped his master. It angered him to be thwarted in the first kindness he showed to the child.

"Yes, mars'," submissively.

Ann Yates looked at the boy sharply. Nothing but an animal which a few dollars could buy or sell; shambling, under-sized, loose-jointed, a puny, yellow face, out of which stared the treacherous, melancholy eyes of his race. Yet some trick of expression caught her shrewd eye; the knobbed, protruding forehead, the discontent, the appetite for something better than his brute life had yet known.

"It's the white blood in him!" she said aloud.

"Eh! How?"

"He'll balk thee yet."

Mr. Strebling smiled superciliously. "Poor Sap!" he said. "The boy has a curious mechanical talent. My wife brought him in from the stables. But these niggers wont bear coddling. He has the insolence of the devil."

The Quaker was right. Just before the boat grated on the shore, they heard a whine from the dog, and saw a rill of scarlet blood creeping over the planks. The little mulatto knelt with staring eyes beside him on the deck, his arms about Luff's neck, smelling his breath, just as they had slept for two years in the stable-loft at home. The boy's colorless face looked unusually small and childish, yet clammy sweat had come out on it, such as pain wrings from a man. The poor brute's dim eyes were fixed on it, and he tried feebly to lick the boy's sleeve where it touched his jaws.

"Did you do this?" said Mr. Strebling.

The mulatto nodded; but he did not take his look off of the dog's face until its eyes grew glassy; then he lifted one paw, and let it fall heavily to the ground.

"He wur all I had," he said. His teeth chattered, his eyes closed, a chill crept over the limp little body.

"Dear me! dear me! Epileptic. These half-breeds are terribly diseased in body and mind!" said good-humored Mr. Strebling, who hated a scene; and he walked away, nervously, a moment after.

The Quaker looked down at the forlorn little figure with the muddy water oozing up about it, then out at the dusky river, at the plane of gray, unanswering sky. It seemed to her as if they opened to her suddenly, dark, dateless years, before either she or this boy was born; slow generations of slavery and vice which had conceived and brought forth this diseased little animal, and left him at her feet. Washed him there, a dreg of the great ebbing tide.

"And I'm Ann Yates, half crazy, they say, and kept by charity. What should I have to do for him, in God's name?" would have been her thought nakedly put in words. But she only stood, her restless head for once quiet, gravely looking down at him, while Ross, who had stolen round, stooped across the dog, her lips apart, tugging at his coat. He opened his eyes at last, and got up slowly, pulled the dusty felt hat on his head askew, and clasped his hands behind his neck, a trick the boy had when tired.

"He'll never lick anybody's hand but ole Sap's now, I reckon," with a grin.

Ross waited a moment, growing red and pale by turns. When she came a step or two closer to the little mulatto:

"I think that was a very good dog," she said, in a weak little

quaver; and then, after one or two breathless gasps, she put out her hand and took the yellow fingers in hers.

The boat was moored by this time with a heavy jerk. Through the darkness you could hear the rumbling of the great Conestoga wagon going on shore, the jingling of the bells, and Joe's bass voice shouting for Ross.

"Well, good-night," she said, gently, and ran off, gladly enough.

Sap, who had stood cringing as long as she talked to him, sat down again, and put his face on the dog's cold hide. He heard his master calling, but the sound came to him dully through the dark and cold. It *was* dark and cold, that was all he knew; that, and the weight of old Luff, who would not creep close to him to-night for warmth. He would never waken to bark at the moon, and then snuggle into the straw, licking his hand, again. Never again.

Presently a warm hand touched him. "Here, boy, I must have a word with thee," said Ann Yates.

CHAPTER II.

ECHOES.

THE tiny square house among the bags up by Joe's high seat never was so cosy or warm as now, when the wagon with its ringing chimes in front plunged into the mysterious night, turning its back on the dull river, and the greasy lamps and dog's red blood and trouble there. Ross turned the back of her thoughts on them, too. She had meant to cry a great deal immediately for that dog, and perhaps stay awake all night. But first she and her grandfather had an anxious time to find Brouse, and when they were once started, there were so many subjects of interest lying over since he went out to Berks County on Saturday, that she hardly could find words fast enough.

She had not heard yet how Bet's lame foot was, or if Geoff had got rid of that cough, or how often the Major had contrived to fall this trip. There certainly never were eight horses that contrived to pick up so many ailments, she was sure. Joe's growl broke in deprecatingly:

"I dunno, Sweetheart—about that. I wouldn't go so far as that. They be a good lot, 't seems to me. Seems as if they wur old friends, to me," tapping the broad backs of the wheelers.

"Oh, of course—I know—I didn't mean—" the words tumbling out headlong, she not being sure how much the "old friends" had understood, or been hurt. "They're good stock, too, Josh McNabb says. They're blooded horses, every one, he says."

"Blood don't weigh so much with me as with other folks—blood don't," said Joe, hastily, a sharp twang in his tone. "Don't you

ketch them notions, Rossline. When you've got a horse," meditatively, "with a good pull from each jint, and a clear eye, and a stiddy gait, starting from the hanches, it be better'n your high pacers, full of nerves and tricks. As with horses, so with men."

Ross nodded emphatically. Joe Burley fell into a profound silence, chewing the cud of his remark. Once his conscience stung him, apparently. "Was I rough with you, gal?" turning his broad, red face on her quickly.

Ross only laughed for reply, laying her head in its woolen hood on his knee, which was broad and soft as a feather pillow. Joe touched her shut eyelids with his stubby finger, smoothed the lashes.

"So? So? You and your grandad be good chums, hey, Sweetheart? But them notions about blood be like pison—to me."

Now and then, afterward, Joe coughed, and mumbled something more about "blood." The unusual idea in his brain was as troublesome as a pike floundering in a muddy pool; it would neither go out, nor be quiet. Ross, with a vague notion that he was in trouble, patted his knee with her hand, as if she beat a soft tune. But it was a very good place up there. What with her fragrant baskets at her feet, and Joe's mountainous figure bounding her in, and the supper she knew of at home, she was filled with a general herby, affectionate, enough-to-eat perception of the world, as warm and relishing as was possible.

Yet the night yawned about them outside of the wagon, cold and immeasurable. There were no stars overhead; no landmarks of fences or houses; they were plunging into a gray, empty gulf that extended, very likely, clear to the edge of the world; there was nothing to define it but the timed ringing of the horses' bells and the baying of a dog, far off. Whether out of sympathy with his master, or for some other cause, Brouse, under the wagon, barked restlessly again and again. Ross cuddled in closer to her grandfather; it was colder and silenter than any night that she remembered. And to make the silence more intense, she had a vague consciousness of stealthy footsteps following them along the road; steadily, now near, now further off. It was but fancy; when she set her ears to listen, the noise was gone, or proved to be only her grandfather's stertorous breathing.

Once, however, Joe raised his head from his yarn jacket. "Did you hear anything a follerin, Ross?" pulling up the horses, but not looking back. Ross thought he was afraid; he did not wait to hear her answer; put his hand up behind his ear, to listen.

"It's nothin'," with a whistle to the horses of relief. "Once or twice in my life I've heard steps a follerin' of me," he said in a subdued voice, when they were rumbling on again. "Different ones has different signs sent when death's comin', you see. Some hears

a piping like a whistle in a high wind, and some hears a crack like a whip-handle laid on heavy on the door-post. But I don't look for no warnin' of death. My fears don't lie that way; I kin be soon ready when the Good Man sends word. I've done my dooty to the beasts and my customers. I'll say good-by to the little gal and—" he stopped there to pat Ross' head.

Joe had painted this heroic exit of his so often that he rather enjoyed it. But it was always new and bitter to the child.

"Well, don't you fret, little Sister. I'm rugged yet, thank God. But there has been steps a follerin' me, more than once," in a whisper. "It was no living foot as made them."

"Well, now, grandad, death did not come," said Ross, wetting her dry lips with her tongue.

"No. Not death. Wuss. Never you mind what it was," rousing himself. "There's been times when I thought it would touch you. But your grandfather's body's big enough to put between you and that."

The night became less vague as he spoke, a gray, luminous line defining the horizon where the moon was rising—buildings, trees, the old mill began to loom out of the space, yet, it was but as shadows of their real, daylight shapes. The silence grew painful to Ross' strained ear; then there struck across it a man's step, far off, light, furtive, coming nearer—nearer. It was gone as suddenly as it came.

She looked up into Joe's face; it was vacant. He had heard nothing.

"I fancied I saw a thing to-night as brought old times up," said he, trying to force back his old cheerfulness. "That's what set me on this graveyard talk, and to thinking that tramp-trampin' was behind us."

Ross said nothing.

They were beyond Camden now, turning off into the turnpike road, which ran through patches of wood, and Jersey truck farms. The moon shone out clearly. The steps were no longer heard. The air grew wholesome and life-like.

Ross sat up looking at the cobwebs on the fences, white and rimy in the moonlight. When she was young, she used to believe in fairies, and that they dressed themselves out of that stuff, somehow. She was very sure there were no such things now. Quite sure.

Down along the sea-coast, where her grandfather went in Winter to buy furs and wild fowl for the New York market, they used to tell her, in the farm-houses, very different stories from those. About the crew of a Spanish brig, wrecked a hundred years ago, who patrolled the beach every night, guarding their treasure buried in the sand. Sometimes, in the full of the moon, you would hear

their knock-knocking, trying to piece together the fragments of their old crumbling wreck, and see their broad plumed hats and cloaks on the shore, but when you came near, the sounds died into the beat of the surf, and the waving feathers, and fluttering mantles seemed to be but the foam and dash of the incoming tide. Now that was a story that one could know was true. And there was a tradition that, if any one would bring a boat to carry them away from this unhappy country, and leave it moored over night, in the morning it would be gone, and heaped on the beach there would be a king's ransom of jewels. Now, that was a good plan to have for the future. She had begun several times to save up her money for that boat. She often talked to her grandfather of the house they would build some day, though she did not enter into the particulars. It would need a good deal of courage to go with the boat alone. She would tell him when it was done.

"Hillo! here be home!" shouted Joe as the wagon drew up in front of a house as square, and short, and dumpy, as Ross herself. Only a month ago Joe had bought that house—but it had a home face from the first day. There was a door-step that children's feet had worn, and beehives and old apple trees in the garden, and wrens in the eaves, and crickets in the broad, stone hearth, and a gray, sleepy cat who came in and lay down before the kitchen fire as soon as it was lighted. A difference between this and boarding-house in city alleys! A house, and stable, and beehives, and lilacs, and hollyhocks like these, had a flavor of home to old Joe and the girl which they could never have to people who had not roosted over corner groceries, and looked out on vacant lots heaped with ashes and potato peelings, through hot Summer days.

Brouse had all the lazy, life-is-long air of a thoroughbred country dog already; and Geoff, and the Major, and the very old Conestoga itself, knew home, and, Ross thought, really believed they had always lived there. The barking, and creaking, and neighing, when they stopped at the gate, quite broke up the stillness of the whole night, while Ross' laugh and Joe's subdued bellow, formed the ground and top of the confusion.

She danced an impatient little jig on the foot-board of the wagon in her hurry to be taken down. She had no time to waste, she could tell them. There was the fire to stir up and the supper to get, and no makeshift of a supper, either. She ran up the path, pulling off her mittens, stopping to break off some boughs and leaves from bushes near the door; stopping, too, a minute to think this was her ground and her grandfather's, with as keen a sense of ownership as any king's in the great Babylon which he had built. She sunk the soles of her shoes into the tan-bark walk, thinking it was theirs; down to the very centre of the world theirs. Ross was always sure of standing on her own ground, and felt her feet frm under her,

though she was but nine years old; which gave her that gracious, hospitable manner toward other people, so curious in her.

It was an hour before Burley had fed and stowed away his horses for the night, and had washed himself, and combed his thin, gray hair into two flat quirls on either side of his sun-baked face. Then he took off his leather leggins, whisked clean his trousers, and muddy shoes. He was dressing, as usual, for supper—part of his vague system of lifting the little girl up out from his own level, to—he scarcely knew where. Coming up on the porch, he stepped softly, and peeped in the window. If any evil steps had followed him, or if any relentless eyes watched him through the night, the sight of his face, set broad and glowing in the square patch of red light thrown out by the window, might have turned them aside. For, broad as it was, and unshapely, a mass of flabby, fat wrinkles, the dullest eyes might have found in it something akin to all that was delicate and tender in the little child within. If little Sweetheart was oddly clean and whimsical in her tricks of movement about her work, or if she threw her whole strength into it, it was from Sweetheart's grandfather the traits came to her; that was plain.

While he stood looking in, no sound apparently reached him other than the crackling of the wood fire inside, or the sputtering of Ross' cookery; but suddenly he straightened himself, and again put his hand behind his ear. Light, stealthy steps came up the moonlit road, and, as Burley crept cautiously toward the gate, the shadow of a man passing fell on it, and disappeared in the dark lane made by the undergrowth along the fence.

Burley followed him. When he came back, he went directly into the house, the dull vacancy gone from his face with which he had talked to Ross of the supernatural terrors.

"Hillo, little un!" he said, cheerfully, and sat down with a hand on each knee, to watch her cookery; but a something in the cool, gray eyes, and heavy, stern jaws, which she had never seen before, made Ross turn once and again to look at him. He was as grave, she thought, as when he spelled out their chapter in the Bible at night. But the truth was, the thing he had feared had come upon him at last; the danger was imminent, the hope of escape small. Burley meant to fight it out like a man; but not then nor there. He barred the windows, shut tight the door; at least she should know nothing until he was safe or defeated.

Meanwhile Ross dished the supper, setting and resetting the blue delft plates on the table with her burned little hands. She had a keen palate for good cookery, being a healthy, quick-nerved little body. Her dishes were always seasoned and done to a turn. There was a heap of fried chicken, each piece a golden brown; there was a yellow mound of potatoes; there were creamy turnips, and in the middle, silvery stalks of celery in a tray, bedded in red and bronze

beet leaves, and the rich, curled, crisp fringes of green parsley. Joe laughed at this last.

"Your mother was full of such notions," he said, as he pulled a chair to the table; "you favor her in all your little whims, Sweetheart. Sech as your fancy for wearing dark blue gowns and hanging bits of moss and flowers in your hair."

The words seemed to give him a hint, which he caught eagerly; during the supper he found a thousand ways to bring up the same theme—"your mother;" choking back whatever effort it cost him. Ross had heard her name but seldom before.

"My mother died when I was born. I'm an orphan," with a grave little nod, saying what she had learned by rote, years ago, going on eating composedly.

Burley sat smoking by the fire when their supper was over, until the dishes were cleared away, and Ross came up for her seat on his knee; then he put the pipe up on the clock, and lifted her up, smoothing her yellow hair back.

"It be arly, little sister. You needn't go to bed for an hour. Marget—your mother—was a main hand for sittin' late when she was young, as when she was older, and my old woman give her her own rein -her own rein; too much, maybe. She wur sech a purty creetur, she was so dear to us, that we liked her in sight, that's the truth. So ther she'd sit at nights, as it might be here, and yander ud be Robert Comly."

"My father," said the little girl, parrot-like, with another nod. "He's dead. I am an orphan," taking a string of blue beads out of her pocket, and holding them up in the firelight.

Burley patted her hand in his. When he spoke, it was with an unnatural voice, like an unwilling witness forced before the jury. "Robert—Comly. There was no better carpenters than the Comlys, father and son, in Kensington. Bob was a thorough-through boy from the start. Fond of his joke, but true as steel twice het. After old Comly died, Bob he sort o' turned to me fur advice and the like. But it was his likin' for Marget was at the bottom of it, I knowed."

"So then she married him?" said Ross, looking up from her beads. When she saw her grandfather's face, her eyes did not leave it again. He turned away, looking in the fire, his hand moving restlessly over his stubbly whiskers and hiding his mouth. Ross threw her beads on a chair, put her hands on his shoulders.

"We'll talk of something else," she said, decisively. "This isn't pleasant talk for you, grandad."

"Ther's nothin' onpleasant to remember about Robert Comly," shaking off her light touch, doggedly. "He got to be like my own son that lad. You see we never had a son, and when Marget come, late in the day like, it was a disappointment—to *me*. I

wanted a boy. But I was mighty fond of Bob; he was a steddy fellar. Now, Marget was a peart little thing—she never liked advice from the day she went into short clothes. But when she growed up sech a purty creetur, and our hearts was so knit up in her, mother she says, 'Let Marget marry Bob Comly,' says she, 'and then, Joe, you'll have son and da'ater, too. You kin have 'em both,' she says."

"Then they were married," said Ross, gently. "I know the rest of it," her anxious scrutiny never relaxed from his face. "Now the story is done, grandad, will you put coals on the fire? It is cold."

But Burley prosed on. "That's the very hick'ry cheer he used to sit in at nights that Winter. He made this one covered with sheep-skin for me—Bob did. I never knowed a steddier fellar than Bob Comly. There never was a man used me fairer. Ef I ever meet him in the country where he's gone I'll not forget it to him. But it seems to me, to-night, ther's a poor look out for that!" with a sharp, hard laugh, after a pause. He cut a big plug of tobacco and thrust it in his mouth, then clasped his hands over his head, his jaws working, his uneasy eye avoiding hers. "Mother and Bob are safe enough on the other side of the river your hymes sing about, Rossline. But as things is turnin' out, Joe Burley ain't the sort that goes that road. Well, no matter!"

Ross put her frightened little hands about his neck.

"Shall I sing for you now, grandad?"

"No. For God's sake, let me be, Rossline, I've hard lines before me to-night. Let me work it out my own fashion. Talking of Bob Comly and the way he took, 'll be more help to me than all the hymes in the book."

The fire burned low; Ross slid down and replenished it unnoticed; she crept back between his knees, looking up at him. She would be a woman some day, and, after the habit of women, could not leave any one with their trouble in quiet, but must peer curiously into it, to cry over it afterward, and fill her own heart with aching and pity. Burley stared stolidly in the fire; some hard, ugly lines which had marked his face when he was a boy and counted a 'black sheep," came out slowly on it to-night; a scar that dragged one eyelid down grew red and sinister; older and more analytic eyes than little Ross' might have fancied that the man, as well as the features that indexed the man, were sinking back into some old mould which they had nearly outgrown.

But the little girl only gathered a vague notion of the best way to soothe him. "So Robert Comly and Marget were married?" she said, using his words.

"Yes; they wur married."

"And my mother died the day after I was born? My pretty mother! Am I as pretty as Marget?"

Burley smiled at the grave little face. "No, Sweetheart, you kent be that. You favor the Burleys. You've got her eyes and hair, but you're stouter built, tougher grain. It's no loss –its—" he was suddenly silent.

"The day after I was born?" the little girl's eyes grew heavy under the strait lashes. "Did she look at *me?* Did she take any notice of me, or kiss me? Where did she kiss me?" lifting her hand to her face, uncertainly.

"She give you into my arms," said Joe, slowly. "She kissed you all over your wee face a hundred times, I reckon; then she give you into my arms. I hadn't teched you before. Me and Robert Comly wur alone with her that day. Mother was dead long afore. I'm glad whenever I tLink of her being gone afore that day. I reckon, maybe, she never knowed yonder of what had happened down here—the Good Man is merciful."

"Well—she gave me into your arms," prompted Rosslyn.

Joe choked a heavy breath that shook his solid chest, beginning to chew violently. "Yes, she did, Rossline. All she'd said that day was 'my little, little baby,' huggin' and cryin' it over you, with the breath goin' fast from her. I didn't know it wur goin'; or I couldn't have left her alone. But I would neither look at her nor tech her." He put Rosslyn off from him and covered his face with his hands, his elbows propped on his knees.

"I often think how we left her alone. Neither father nor husband nor God, agoin' through that dark vally. You was all she had, she knowed that. She clung to you to the last. Then she give you into my arms. 'It's my poor little baby, father,' she said. I tuk you from her. I couldn't help but do that."

He got up and walked irresolutely across the floor.

"But I left her alone agin. I laid the baby down and stood by the chimbley-side, with my back to the bed."

He stopped, leaning heavily on the mantle-shelf, the scar and blotches looking purple on his pale face. "That was Marget—the purty creeter—as had been my only child; I turned my back to her."

Ross stood facing him with bewildered eyes. "But my father—Robert Comly?"

The old man stopped. "No man could have acted fairer than Bob Comly. I said that. He wur very kind. We wur down in Bucks county then; when we come up to town, he bided with me, and kept his own counsel. He knowed as it wur none of my fault. He give you yer name, Rossline Comly. It was for my sake he did it."

"He died the next year," said Ross, repeating her long learned lesson. "That was how I came to be an orphan."

Burley held up his hand, sharply, to listen. Ross fancied she heard a man's approaching steps without, slow and light.

"It be late, little gal," said her grandfather, hurriedly. "It's been a messable evening, that's true. Yer eyes are sunk in yer head. You be off to bed, Sweetheart."

He watched her anxiously as she made ready. "Don't you mind, Rossline, if you hear a noise of talking down below; I've got into that way lately when I'm vexed in my mind." When she came to bid him good night, he swung her up in his arms, with one of his broad, hearty smiles breaking out over his red face.

"You're a lucky-looking child, Rossline," turning up her face by the chin. "I reckon the Good Man has a keer of you. Seein' you makes me think I'll get through this bout safely," and kissed her lightly on the mouth as he put her down. He watched her going up the crooked stairs, and listened, half smiling, to her firm little tread overhead—listened after he had taken up his place with his back to the fire, and waited for the other steps that had brought worse than death to his threshold years ago, and that, each moment came closer without.

Yet Burley's superstitious terror seemed fantastic enough, for when the footsteps were followed by a knock, and the entrance of a man, it was only the subdued-looking, sandy-haired gentleman off of the ferry-boat, who stood smiling pleasantly before him.

"I knew you were within, Burley"—holding out his hand—"so I came in without a bidding."

"It wurn't likely, James Strebling, as I should call you inside of my door agin."

The other man colored and giggled feebly, rubbing his hands together as if reminded of an awkward mistake. "Now, Burley, you do not keep a grudge for old debts, eh, hey? I came here from Alabama purposely to talk matters over with you, one man of sense with another. I thought, I'm one practical fellow, and Burley is another, and there'll be no trouble in adjusting those old affairs. But, God bless me! how you've altered!" finding his way to a chair, and peering through his spectacles with an attempt at easy carelessness.

The old wagoner remained standing immovable before the fire; he had not lifted his eyes from the floor since Strebling entered.

"Yes, I be altered. For two years after you'd done your work and left here, I hunted you through them Southern States like a weasel in its hole. I'd but one thing to do in life—to put the muzzle of my pistol up to your cowardly brain. Now—I hid from you to-night. I'd give my right arm if you and me had not crossed paths agin! yes, I would."

Strebling was not a coward; besides, when men are cool enough to talk about murder, the danger is over; but he was shocked more than he liked to own. Burley looked like one of his own oxen standing there; yet it occurred to the gentleman for the first time

to question how much hurt that old peccadillo of his had done to the fellow; just as he might have done if he had struck an ox with his rattan. Then he caught what Burley was saying in a hard, quiet voice, curiously divested of all oaths or roughness.

"You p'isoned my life for me once. I was jest beginning to take some pleasure in it when you come agin. I've been tryin' to make myself fit to raise the gal: she's got no father or mother beyont me. Ther' has been times when the world was so friendly about me that I tried to make excuses for even you, James Strebling. But now, as you've thrust yerself in my way—"

He lifted his face, turning the small eyes, bloodshot and red, on him for the first time.

Strebling sprang up, threw down his hat and cane, and coming straight up to the old man, looked him in the face.

"Look here! I'm not a bad man, Burley. That was a damnably shabby trick of mine. I know that. But before God I meant to come back and marry Margaret. I never intended that she should be foisted on another man. Come"—after a pause—"you sowed wild oats yourself once. You know a man does not count on the harvest, when—" He drew back a step suddenly, and stood on guard, watching Burley as he would a beast about to spring at his throat.

"Besides," cautiously, when the old man shifted his position, "let us have peace between us for the girl's sake."

"What is Rossline to you? It's late in the day; Rossline is Marget's da'ater. Ther's not a drop of her father's blood in her body."

"Now, Burley, you are very intemperate. It has not been my fault that I have not claimed the child sooner 'in the day,' as you put it. Whatever James Strebling's faults may be, no one can accuse him of being a harsh father. And this child should have been taken home long ago, and as tenderly cared for as Rob, if my wife had not been living. She's dead now."

Burley turned his ox-like face, baffled and alarmed. It was some time before the fear found its way from his muddled brain into words.

"You be the child's father, an' that gives you some hold on her by law, may be. I don't know. I don't believe that it do. Ther's a lot of common sense in them hard law-words in general. You've been only a curse an' misfortin to Rossline since before she was born, an' I laid myself out to sarve her since I took her in my arms a grooling baby. If she's wanted anything it's been because Joe Burley's wit and strength giv' out in getting it for her. What do you want of her? You've got your friends and your son, and niggers and land; but that little gal's the only thing on 'arth that's worth thrippence to me. I've out-growed all the rest. Mother's

dead and Marget all of them, only that yellow-haired little 'un that keeps a growin' into me, day by day, like a part of myself. No, I don't believe any law 'ill give her to you. I'll see to-morrow."

Strebling observed him warily a moment, then with a sudden ingenuous air, exclaimed, "You're wrong, Burley—all wrong; the law gives me no claim on her. It is the child's good you should look at. I came here for her; I'm free to say that plainly. I'll not marry again, and I'd like a daughter about me in my old age. Bob is independent of me, from his grandfather. I can afford to give her a child's portion, and I'll do it. I will take her as the orphan child of a friend, so that no shame shall come on her. I would make her an educated, tenderly-reared lady—and you—"

"What then, sir?"

"You are making a market-huckster out of her."

There was a dead silence in the room. Overhead, in the loft-chamber, where the moon threw a square light on the bare floor, the little girl sat shivering in her night-gown on the edge of her cot-bed, her yellow hair tucked closely up, her hands clasped about her knees. The voices below reached her now and then; these last words clearly; when she heard them the little freckled face contracted sharply, certain lines which Burley had never seen, came into it; she bent her head to listen.

Her grandfather was silent.

"It is the child you should consider," persisted Strebling. "Not your own selfish pleasure. It is her whole life you are choosing for her."

Still no answer. Ross could hear the clock ticking below, seeming to make a thickened beat through the floor, the plastering, in her own head; but her grandfather said nothing. She slid down, put her brown cloak about her, walked to the stairs. Then Burley's voice, slow and stammering, came up.

"That be a cruel way to put it. But it be true. You're a gentleman, as words go. You've the 'blood' Rossline talked of—this very night. Do what I kin, Rossline 'll grow up like her mother's people. A market-huckster, may-be. How kin I know?" He coughed, cleared his throat, his voice swelling out to suit the burly figure out of which it came, not without a certain coarse dignity in it, beside which Strebling's, with its delicate training, sounded thin and flat. "But, huckster or not, the gal's face is honest, an' the Burley blood's clean. I'll keep it so. I've got to answer to God for her some day. I'll not give her to you. I'll not put her where she'll grow tainted an' cunnin' for all the money or edication that 'ud make her a lady."

The child's face bending over the dark stairway grew more sharp and set, her nails whitened where she clenched the railing with her fingers.

"There is no need of heat in the matter," said Strebling, with an unnatural mildness in his tone. "I think I have acted fairly. I can have no especial love for a child that I have seen but once, but I came here to do what I thought right, and your bluster or insult will not put me aside. I will not allow you to decide the child' fate, Burley, without giving her a chance to know what she will lose."

"You want to leave it to Rossline?" with a chuckle. "Well, she don't have a thought beyond her grandad. I'm contented. You kin do that."

"You will find yourself mistaken in her, then," sharply. "I noted her to-day. There are thoroughbred points in her. She will turn to the ease and delicacy of life as instinctively as a well-blooded animal would forsake offal for its natural food. I will come back in the morning."

"Jest as you please; I'll be contented to leave it to my little gal."

But there was an uneasy hesitation in his voice which had not been there before.

"I will leave this for her. Give it to her when she wakens," taking out the watch which he had bought for Rob, and laying it on the table. As he turned away, a quick step rattled on the stair steps, and a square little figure, wrapped in a stuff cloak that did not hide her bare ankles, stood beside him. She took up the watch and held it out to him.

"I heard that talking. I choose for myself. I want you never to come back here again." She spoke in a whisper, but her face and motions were so angular and sharp, that the voice seemed wiry. Strebling stood, half smiling with amusement, and a certain relief. He was beginning to doubt the wisdom of adopting this pullet of the Burley breed, after all. But he pushed back the watch.

"Whatever you decide, keep that, my dear."

Now, the chain was enamelled with blue, and there was a topaz and a lava seal. It must have been such jewels as these which the crew of the Spanish galleon had buried. She drew a heavy sigh and hesitated. "No, I don't think I will keep it, thank you. I am going to choose for myself. I will not go to be made vile and tainted. You are nothing to me. *I* understand -I am not like other children. I—I have nobody but you!" turning to Burley, catching his arm, and beginning to cry in a shrill, tearless way.

"I'll go," said Strebling, quickly. "I've done my duty. But, Burley, this child is but a child; she's not fit to judge. If she ever needs my help, write to me. I'll not keep any grudge about to-day. It is not likely that I will renew my offer; but I will be willing to help her, certainly—quite willing."

He went hastily out of the door, Burley staring after his thin,

padded figure as he picked his steps along the path outside with an uneasy sense of defeat, he scarce knew why, forgetting that the door was open, and that Ross' feet were bare on the stone floor. She knew it, and cried a little more bitterly for it, feeling quite neglected and alone. He thought she had no idea of the crisis in her life which she had just passed; but a girl of nine years has keen and horribly real perceptions of the few edges of the outer world which touch her; the sharper, maybe, because all beyond is as misty and unreal as eternity. Then the love, and hate, and pain of youth have always in them a weak, acrid, insipid flavor, like the juices of all unripe fruit; the child, clinging to his knees, had none of the quiet, full consciousness of having chosen the right thing that slowly filled and quieted Burley's brain.

"It be monstrous cold," he stammered, at last, with a sort of heave and gulp, shaking himself, and then lumbering across the kitchen to close the door. He fumbled at the lock when it was shut, looking doubtfully at the forlorn little figure on the hearth in front of the low burning fire, with her hands clasped behind her back, and her face following him steadily.

"Yer eyes is sunk into yer head like a sleep-walker's, little gal," coming up, and putting his hands on her head. "It's been a messabul night, as I said afore. It's goin' to be the last of that sort, hey? Why, Rossline! Tut! tut! yer skin's cold and dry as death! Why, Sweetheart!"

She cried out, at that, that she understood—that she was not like other children; that it would have been better for them all if she had died on the bed that day with her pretty mother, hugging his knee meantime, and burying her face in his patched trousers.

"Why, Rossline!" picking her up with a hoarse, unsteady laugh. "What a silly little un my gal is to forget her grandad altogether! She puts him clear out of account! Yer feet is like ice; here, give me this un in my hand. She forgets her old grandad! *She* don't take no count of the old man that has got nothin' but her in the world. Nothin'. If you were dead with Marget, what ul I be? hey, little sister? Jest a empty husk with the kernel gone, a moulderin' away. That's it. A moulderin'—away. You don't know how yer the life of me, Rossline," gravely holding her in his arms as if she were a baby, and rocking her. She had sobbed herself quiet now.

"Ye'r the first one since Robert Comly died—" he began again, when she lifted up her head, her eyes on fire, bidding him never talk of Robert Comly to her again; that he was nothing to her; that *she* loved her mother, whatever the others did—her pretty mother—with another burst of sobbing and tears. She hated Robert Comly and his goodness; at which the old man only smiled gravely, and rocked her in silence till she fell asleep.

The sky the next morning was filled with that thin, brilliant sunshine that belongs to the early Winter days; the air cold and exhilarating as iced wine. Ross went gravely about, watching her grandfather fodder the horses and mend the harness; she was quite idle herself; her little body was nervous and trembling like an instrument too tightly strung; she wanted to cry on his neck; to tell him how her heart was full of love for the old man who had nothing but her in the world—now that she was unlike all other children, and stood quite alone with not even a dead father or mother of whom she might be proud, and love. But Burley seemed to have forgotten last night altogether; he swore in his good-humored way as usual at the beasts, and whistled the "British Grenadiers," between times; his jolly face red and perspiring as always.

She had a vague, half-unconscious feeling that there would be a great change in her life, after this crisis was past. But the breakfast waited for her to cook—and then, the dishes for her to wash; and presently her grandfather looked in to say, was she ready? and that he could take her into town if her baskets were packed; and when her hood was on, he hoisted her up among her heaps of sage and sweet marjoram, and drove her as usual into her stall in the market.

It was a frosty, cheerful morning, and he kept up a hearty joking with everybody they met, and with Ross herself, and she answered him in kind.

But she began to remember what splendor of fairy-like good fortune had come near her last night, and been turned away. It was just as if she had seen and touched the cavaliers with their floating plumes and golden spurs, and that now they were gone, and nothing was left but the muddy beach and incoming tide.

They reached the market at last, and she mounted her high stool. There it all was; the low, dirty-blue roof overhead; the brick pillars pasted with bills; the tiresome, muddy street, with the old wagon carrying off its pleasant music; there was the crowd of untidy women in front of her with their baskets; Scheffer haggling with one of them over a bone of meat on one side, and Kit Vance, slimy and red-faced, diving into her filthy mackerel hogsheads, on the other. Kit was a "market-huckster;" Kit was "honest and clean-blooded." Her grandfather meant her for—this. This market and that woman—there she could see herself, twenty years from now. He was very fond and kind, but she knew he would never go beyond that; it was his way. Never beyond that.

That day Ross did not go to sleep; she did not laugh at the squabbling about her; but sat, puckered up in an old-womanish fashion, her chin in her hands, selling a bunch of sage now and then, and dropping the pennies in her pocket.

The windows of a house down the street were open, and she could hear a violin within. The boy only played some simple little air over and over, but it made her cry, with a homesick, lonely feeling, new to her.

At last it grew clear to her. She was going to help herself. Then she sat straight up, her peaked, sharp face and soft, brown eyes staring into the fish stall. She would be a woman out there in the world some day. She would be educated; stand higher than Strebling could have placed her.

She would have no help, not from the living man who called himself her father, nor the dead one who had loaned her his name.

Her chin sunk into her hand again, and she sat quiet and unsmiling. In the course of the morning Kit Vance called to her for some change. "Ross! Rosslyn Comly!" she said.

"Ross Burley's my name," said the little girl, handing over the money. "My mother's name's good enough for me."

"Why, you ben't agoin' to make *that* of yerself!" cried Kit, shrewishly, at which they all laughed. For there had been some ugly rumors about Burley's daughter, which were not yet forgotten.

"Ross Burley's my name," steadily arranging her herbs. She thought, hot with her purpose from head to foot, "I'll go just as I am, shame and all. They shall see what I can do. I'll borrow nobody's name."

When the afternoon shadows began to lengthen, she grew sleepy, thinking of the purpose; one thing forever is tiresome, so she got out her thimble, and a little box of purple and green silk rags, and began to make her doll an entire new suit. She had it finished when she went home that evening, and tried it on to show her grandfather, thinking of it more than anything else. Old Burley saw no change in her, and she knew of none.

It was only a trowel's weight of earth that had been lifted, but the ground was broken for the building that was to be, and no man could lay it straight again.

CHAPTER III.

THE DISPATCH.

FIFTEEN years have passed: the market stall, and the yellow-haired little girl in it are gone. But the child cannot be as far off, and unreal to us, as she is to the Ross Burley of to-day.

Instead of market and herb-girl, then; a road cut through a farm lying in the rich river-bottom of the Cumberland, in Kentucky. A mere belt of yellow clay; grass-grown, and full of the ruts and holes made by the hoofs of the cattle, with high banks on either side; a badly-kept road, only used as a drift-way by which the mules and cows of the farms inside were driven down to the ford yonder. But a lonely, pretty bit of landscape for a picture, with the low October sun slanting over the bronzed stubble-fields on one side, throwing a maze of black lines of fence shadow down into the dry road, and shooting level lances of light into the thick undergrowth of the opposite bank, and the dark oak and ash woods beyond, out of which the autumnal tints are just fading, scarlets and chrome yellows alike sinking into a dull copper color. The strip of road, the mosses of red and blackish green mottling the banks, the sumach bushes with knobs of maroon velvet, reddening in the sunlight where they were thrust out from the green; blackened maple leaves blown along by the wind; the rustling of the trees; the thrum, thrum of the woodpecker; that was all that there was to see or hear.

Yet Miss Conrad, taking her evening walk, pacing along in her usual grave, steady fashion, was conscious of an unwonted stillness and loneliness in the road. There were no brown chippeys hopping before her as usual in the ruts, or squirrels peering down from the fence-rails with beady black eyes; her own, gray and straightforward, which seemed to observe nothing, suffered no trifles like these to escape them; the senses, too, with which Nature had endowed Margaret Conrad's slow, solid, white body, were keen as those of a hound or an Indian. She noted a peculiar stillness in the air, a faint sweet smell, which disappeared when she tried to give it name. Here and there, too, as she passed along, the grass was darker, and damp in spots under her feet. There had been no rain, and it was too early for dew. She went to the other side of the road, disliking, as usual, what she did not understand. When she came to the river, and sat down there, she had a certainty in her mind that she had left something behind her in the narrow strip of road, other than the underbrush, and yellow clay, and red October sunset.

She sat for an hour or two on the pebbles of the beach, her hands clasped about her knees, as motionless as any tree-stump near her, until the melancholy twilight came, and darkening, gave place to a clear, cold moonrise. Neither twilight nor moonrise suggested any of the usual delicate, flavorless reveries of young maidens to her brain; she was fully occupied in watching a frost-bitten bee creeping home. She made a bridge of her firm finger for it once or twice across perils in the way; at home she was a successful bee-fancier, because, perhaps, the bees fancied her, as they always do people of cleanly, sweet habit and kindly temper. Margaret never had read a Hymn to Nature in her life, but she was a keen judge of cattle; had found out that caterpillars would move to music, and a hundred traits of the Kentucky fishes and wild fowl that are not in the books. "They were better company than most people," she said, with a dogged scorn of her lovers, and of grammar.

Coming back through the road, she stopped now and then to listen; but the silence was unnaturally deep; once she startled a black, ill-looking bird from a spot among the bushes, and flapping its wings heavily, it flew away, circling through the moonlight. The falling dew had almost chilled the weak odor out of the air. Yet at times she caught it faintly; once or twice a swarm of black beetles scattered before her feet; the maze of shadowed lines on the moonlit road looked to her like mysterious writing. She halted, then presently shutting her mouth closer as if she had read the writing, and comprehended it, went on out of the road at an even, steady pace, to the lane beyond, in which she heard voices approaching.

She stopped, and in a moment saw the red spark of a cigar as it was thrown away, and two men coming toward her. She pulled on her hood impatiently.

Designed by W Hennessy.

UNTIL THE MELANCHOLY TWILIGHT CAME.—

"Neither will do; the book-worm would make as miserable a bungle of the matter as poor Rob," she thought.

"Stop. Turn back with me. We will go to the house; there's something uncanny down that road," gathering up the heavy folds of her dress as she stepped up on the long grass.

One of them removed his cap, showing a lazy, good-humored face, and bending six feet of loose-jointed, broadly-built body deferentially as he spoke to her, with a turgid sort of tenderness in voice and look.

The other, a tall man, who looked grave and middle-aged beside the dashing young soldier, fell back.

"I mean," she said abruptly, "that there's a wreck down yonder, which I have found; and I warn you off from it, Rob. That was all."

"It is fortunate that you found nothing worse, strolling about so late, with our army at Monticello, and the Yankees at Somerset. Zollicoffer can rein in the bushwhackers no better than Schoepf. A stray shot—If you have no thought for yourself," lowering his voice, "for me—"

"That will do, Rob," dryly. "There! I knew you'd stumble if you did not pick your steps."

The young man drew himself up, muttering angrily.

"I had no wish to snub you, Rob, boy, if that is what you mean," in the same grave, motherly manner. "Not more than I would old Rover. You're not unlike a good breed of Newfoundland, after all," looking up into his flushed, handsome face, with a laugh. "You're as honest, and as game, and as dull! I never thought of the likeness before," and again she laughed good humoredly, and swept on with her firm, free step, complacent at having at last hit on the true estimate of Rob Strebling, and set it out so neatly.

He fell back beside the older man to give her the path, following her large, compact figure with a baffled, feeble smile, and dog-like, affectionate eyes. Once, helping her through a stile, his hand lingered unseen on the folds of her dress. It was corded satin, of some dark, warm color; heavy, rich, and quiet, as was all her drapery; to Strebling it seemed a part of herself. The man beside him bit his thin lips, and buttoned his coat nervously, wishing in his soul that the day was come when these guests would be gone, and he could be quiet again with his book and his laboratory; acids were never coarse, nor alkalies vulgar; and if a book was a vapid companion you could put it down; but these people were guests and kinsfolk. He had an alarmed sense of especial antipathy for this remarkable young woman who knew no more of the winsome little affectations of other girls than would a Normandy draught-horse; but be she what she might, it was contrary to his Virginia notions of decorum to annoy any woman, even by homage, or to lay a finger

unpermitted on the hem of her garment. No gentleman could act as Rob Strebling had done; no Kentucky gentleman, at least.

They reached the veranda of the house; Rob stood, hat in hand, to say good-night — a dashing, soldier-like figure, he well knew, with the moonlight full on his curly brown hair and beard, and frank face. Inside of the major's uniform of the C. S. A., he suffered to be seen the waistcoat of rich Lyons velvet, the delicate shirt front; his studs were diamonds; his sleeve-buttons emeralds; his ring a ruby; a heavy rose perfume stirred about him; the year of the war had not materially changed either his clothes or tastes.

Miss Conrad sent him off as a boy to school. "You're on guard, Bob, you say, to-night. It is quite time you were gone;" giving him her hand as if it had been a bit of wood—turning to the other man with a relief in her eyes, as they fell on his scrupulously quiet dress and face.

"You are severe in your discipline of Strebling," he said, with an amused smile.

"Of the dead and absent, no evil," dryly. "But I wanted him safely set on his way—" An uneasy glance at the road ended the sentence. The moon had drifted behind heavy clouds—clouds of the opaque gray, that prophesy snow.

"Your wreck will be hid before morning?" opening the door for her to pass in.

"Yes. But we cannot go down. There is a patrol by the ford at night," anxiously knitting her brow.

"What is it? What did you see?" startled by her face.

"I saw nothing. When you start out gunning in the morning, Garrick, I will go with you down to the road. There will be less risk of interruption then than now."

She spoke in a tone of quiet authority which amused him. The man who had spent his life in a library was but a boy, in her opinion, when work was needed.

They went into the warm, lighted hall. Without, the moon threw a white light over the farm-house, and fields, and the woods and tents of the outposts of Zollicoffer's army. But in the lonely road there was a shadow. The moonlight, which framed all else into a quiet home picture, ignored, and left unfound the alien, unwelcome thing that lay under the drifting maple leaves, with its face upturned. When the morning air lifted the clouds, and, driving them apart, showed the arched blue overhead, and the veiling snow whitely folded over tent and farm house and field, a few flakes had found their way through the thicket, down to the wreck beneath, vainly trying to cover it with the decency of their charity.

By day-break, Garrick Randolph, game-bag slung across his back, and gun in hand, was breaking the snow down to the cattle-road, followed by Miss Conrad, who shivered inside of her heavy cloak and hood.

He asked no questions, seeing that it was her mood to be silent. Her mood was not only silent –it infected him with a gravity which he tried in vain to shake off, humming a tune briskly to himself when he had left her any distance behind. When they reached the road, however, she took the advance, going on quickly until she came to the spot from whence she had chased the beetles. It was covered now with snow.

She pointed into the bushes. "Put down your gun and bag."

"What is it? What did you see?"

"Nothing. I told you I saw nothing. But I felt death in there. I always know when there is a dead body near me. How could I tell you—*how?*" impatiently. "Hold back this grape-vine—it is across my foot," as she thrust her way beside him into the thicket. She was as strong a woman as he was a man; and she kept step with him. But when they had come to a heap of clothes covered with dead leaves and the melting snow-flakes, she turned aside.

"I knew this work would be to do. I'm sick. But give me a minute, and I'll help you, Garrick."

She was of women, womanish, after all, a fact which Garrick sometimes doubted; her grave, high-featured face was colorless, but for the blue scoring about her mouth and eyes, and her hands cold as the dead man's body which she helped to carry out of the thicket. But she did help to carry it, and when it was laid on the road, took the head on her lap to keep it out of the snow.

"Who is it, Garrick?" after he had busied himself about it—she with her head turned away.

"A scout, I suspect, shot by some stragglers from one or the other army. He has been wounded here in the side, and escaped so far to creep into the thicket and die."

"North or South?"

He scanned the butternut clothes, the square, compactly-built face. "The garb is the garb of Esau, but the face is Jacob's."

She made an effort to fold the ragged coat over his breast, while Garrick kept his thin, nervous fingers on the cold forehead, taking time leisurely to philosophize. He was looking at the great mystery of Death through this poor shell: thinking how, perhaps, an eternity of joy or suffering already lay between himself and this man; thinking of the hour when he—

"Look here, Garrick! Only this thin cotton rag between his chest and the snow! God help us!" She was unfastening her cloak and making a shroud of it as she spoke.

"What matters the fate of this husk? Life never seemed so real to me as now in this unexpected——wreck, as you call it. Your wreck is a bark now on an infinite tide—"

"I don't know much about the tides in the other world, Garrick. The good Lord gives me so much to do here. I suppose

He takes care of us all through. I think this man was a mechanic," her gray, absorbing eyes passing over his face and horny hands with their peculiar quiet gaze. "It is a Northern face, and manly - manly."

She looked up to the range of low hills bounding the northern horizon. "I suppose," she said slowly, "he has an old mother, or a wife maybe, somewhere, who think nobody else in the world is like him. I wish they knew that I'll do all I can for the poor fellow. I wish they did."

Something in the deep, slow voice made the man's nerves unsteady, and brought tears to his eyes; he did not brush them away, not thinking whether she noticed them or not. He felt himself to be an unsteady sort of fellow in a practical work like this, and began fumbling with the man's feet, which were clogged with snow, ashamed to acknowledge he was waiting for a suggestion from the girl.

"I see no reason for not calling some of the people down from the house," she said, doubtfully. "If he had been a Northerner, and Rob Strebling's father there—unless it should be one of his loyal days, after a Union victory What is this clenched in his hand?"

"Nothing. A bullet only. I think," mildly, "you are unjust to Strebling; he is a sincere man, though vacillating "

"Let me look at that bullet; for a Minié rifle, eh? As for Mr. Strebling—wherever there's weakness, there's crime, before or after. Garrick! there is something wrong with this bullet—it is too light," weighing it in her palm. In another moment she was at work on it with her teeth, twisting it in the centre. A screw suddenly opened, and the bullet fell into two pieces. She drew out a fine slip of paper, which was covered with minute writing.

"This is your business. You are the man of us two," she said gravely, handing it to him.

He took it, and turned aside a moment. When he came back, she was watching him. "He was one of our people?"

"Yes."

"Whom can you trust?"

Garrick stopped in his uneasy walk up and down. "Cole," after a moment's pause. "He is the blacksmith; you will find him in the quarters, Miss Conrad, if you will help me so far. He can smuggle a box from the shop here, and we can put this poor fellow out of sight."

She was going, when he added, "You had better not return. It will attract notice from the house."

"Yes." She turned back then, and stooped over the dead soldier, silent for a few minutes. When she looked up, Garrick was standing with his cap lifted.

"I was not saying any prayer," quickly; "I am a heathen, I believe; but there are so many different sort of people in the world! I was trying to remember his face, in case—there might be such a case, you know—I should ever find out any of his kinsfolk. I could tell them—" She stopped.

"It is an honorable face," said Garrick, looking down on it with his sensitive, speculative eyes; "though I should judge the man to be illiterate and of low birth. It is thoroughly plebeian, but full of purpose—observe. I never saw aim or persistent effort so stamped on features."

They were both silent, standing on each side of the body. The gleam of blue sky at dawn was already overcast; thick, gray clouds muffled the heavens from horizon to horizon; the snow began to fall, in a few large, drifting flakes.

"Well! that is the end of it—to be shovelled under this snow," she said, bitter, on the dead man's behoof.

"I should think," said Garrick, his voice thin and sharp, "that his balked purpose would taunt a man like this always, whatever may be his new work in eternity, yonder. I—I cannot submit to think of the poor fellow's life being thwarted in what was doubtless its one heroic deed, when I could have helped it."

"You?"

"I could finish his work."

"You mean—"

"These are dispatches from Schoepf. The fate of the Army of the Cumberland may depend on them. I judge this from a word or two which I have deciphered. There are few ciphers which I cannot read, and this is the contrivance of a school boy. I can carry them, and, delivering them without giving my own name, discover his."

"What then?"

"He would lose no credit don't you comprehend? The mother or wife you spoke of would believe his errand done before he died."

Margaret's gray eyes rested for a moment or two on the thin, glowing face before her. "I understand," in a lower voice. "But do you know the risk of crossing up into Ohio? I do. There is not a scrub-oak on the barrens, behind which you may not wager you will hear the twang of a musket, and you, Garrick Randolph, will be a doubly-marked man. There are none of your neighbors who do not know that, long ago, you would have been in the Federal army, but that you would not bring ruin on your father's head. Even I knew it, in Pennsylvania."

"There is no cause to keep me now," he said, quietly. He did not glance at the black clothes he wore, nor did his eyelids tremble. Whatever his father and he had been to each other was known to

them—the one dead, the other living—this woman should not lay her meddling hand on it.

"If you wish to join the Federal ranks, there is Schoepf at Somerset," she persisted. "See, Mr. Randolph, I am a stranger to you. If we had been twins, and sat on our mother's knee, we would have been strangers. But I do not want to see you throw your life away on a fool-hardy bit of Quixotism, such as this. I crossed the Ohio a month ago to come here; but even I, though passed from one outpost to another with a flag of truce, knew that we came through the barrens at the risk of life. And you look at this," pointing to the man at her feet.

"You are going back again."

"That is for the help of the living," quickly, "not the dead."

She was turning off, when she came back hastily. "Give me the paper. I am going back. I hate anything underhand; but I'll smuggle it through—in the gauntlet of my glove, in my boot-heel. Give it to me, Garrick."

"No," putting down her hand gently. "I have a fancy to do this myself for the poor fellow."

She stood silent a moment. "So be it. I am glad you told me of the dispatch," in her ordinary slow, grave tones. "I am glad you trusted me. I will keep the secret."

Garrick lifted his cap, looking after her with a quiet smile. "I think I told you," he said, when she was out of hearing, "because you knew it already."

CHAPTER IV.

THE DEPARTURE.

"'Now stir the fire, and draw the curtains close,
So let us welcome peaceful evening in.'

Ah, Cowper! Cowper! Let your Tennysons or your Göthes probe human nature as they will, it is the bard of Olney that soothes us—soothes us; like Summer air, or sleep, or—um! Yes, Cowper for me, Miss Conrad."

"Very likely," was her not very relevant reply, not looking up from her sewing.

It was Rob Strebling's father in one of his sentimental veins, standing on the hearth-rug beside her, his back to the glowing fire, still lean, padded, glossily dressed; not a day older, apparently, than he was fifteen years ago, for a sandy wig had replaced the sandy hair, and the whiskers, which might have betrayed telltale touches of time, were gone from his clean-shaven face; one white, wrinkled hand was held behind him, the fingers of the other gently patted his lips as he looked, affably smiling, down at her

"The mission of the poet is to soothe. Surely, to soothe. He shares the office of the fair sex when we turn from the fray and heat of the world's struggles to the sanctities sanctuary of home. Neither poet nor woman should look into the morbid depths of human nature. Ah, vexed human nature!" said Mr. Strebling, struggling to get back to land, finding himself in deep water.

"What should a young creature like Margaret know of frays and human nature?" said a sweet voice, and an old lady beside her put a delicate hand, in a half-scared way, on the heavy folds of lustreless black hair, eyeing her furtively, as a mild, motherly old puss might the young hound just imported to the fireside from some world of which she knew nothing. Young women of the present day were different from those she knew. It was owing to the "march of mind," perhaps, or transcendentalism, which was the same thing, she believed; they had not penetrated into the old Virginia houses in which she had lived; among the light hearted, clear-eyed young girls there; girls whose literary tastes were formed on the Spectator, and Scott's novels; who dispensed the hospitality of their fathers' houses in a gay, gracious way, going to Richmond in Winter and to Greenbrier in Summer, dancing with their cousins until they married some of them, and became housekeepers, and mistresses, and mothers. Perhaps they did not keep up with the run of current books, but they were tainted with no vulgar radicalism about slavery or spirit rapping, and there was a repose, a thoroughbred air about them which she had never seen in the restless New England women. As for this new-found relation, she was of another species—if her mother was a Page; and the old lady's mild, faintly-colored face turned from time to time wistfully toward the girl, while she smiled graciously in assent to Mr. Strebling's lecture on the poets. Margaret's quiet, downright, unsmiling face was very attractive to gentlemen she had heard; she was thankful her nephew, Garrick, had escaped!

"How peculiarly you sew, dear Margaret," she purred. "Your threads are so long, and your needle moves so steadily and swiftly. Now my niece Lou has so many finical little ways, it is quite a play to see her; but you sit there always quiet, and strong as a machine—"

"Ah! here comes Garrick!" said Mr. Strebling, peeping out through the crimson curtains into the snow-covered avenue without. "Out gunning since morning! He will bring in a gust of cold air presently. These people who are capable of dragging all day through snow for such game as rabbits, have no comprehension of weaker nerves," shivering back to the fire. Margaret did not lift her face from her work; she had heard the quick, nervous step on the snow long before. Randolph had been gone since morning; the man was buried then, she concluded, and the hastily formed

plan of the morning was to be carried into effect; the day had been spent in arranging matters on the plantation before his departure. He would start that night. When he came into the room a few moments later, carefully shaved and dressed, as usual, her wide, gray eyes rested on him with a sincere pleasure. He must know that there was every chance that he was going to his death; and he was so quiet about it! Who would have believed that there was such thorough pluck in the nervous, awkward fellow?"

But there was a drop of gallant blood in everybody if you only touched the right vein! She got up suddenly, and held out her hand to Garrick, as one brave man might to another; there was something generous in the touch of the hand, which was both large and warm, that was like a hearty cheer to him starting on his forlorn hope; it brought a heat to his thin cheek, and a cheerfuller greeting for them all, for Garrick, when touched, was always most apt to be playful and joking. Mrs. Page knew that, and looked uneasily from him to the girl's gray eyes, which had burned for a moment with a sudden splendor of meaning.

"Dear! dear! if Garrick should be snared, after all!" she thought as she bustled out to order his supper. "They say old Conrad had Indian blood," and then grew quiet, remembering how delicately fastidious he was in the matter of family, how he cherished his pure descent back to the Clampernouns of Elizabeth's time, a lineage on which there had fallen no stain of dishonor. Cultured, honorable gentlemen, the Randolphs, all. "And poor old Conrad going from horse-racing to itinerant preaching at a jump! No, no! he's safe!" and she trod lightly back, rustling her gray silk dress, followed by Viney with the tray of devilled turkey, corn-bread, and coffee.

She had no trouble in forcing Garrick to eat; he established himself cosily in a corner, made her wait on him, brought the tears to her eyes, laughing at his jokes. He was always her darling, but it was not often he was boyish and light-hearted as to night.

Margaret, whose eyes did not apparently leave her work, saw that Randolph's face never lighted with his laugh. There was a worn easy-chair by the fire which had been his father's; when he died and Garrick came home to the house in which there was only left poor old Aunt Laura to welcome him, he had taken it for his own; judging himself, it may be, as he sat in it night after night, whether he filled the place of the true, honorable gentleman who was gone.

He did not sit in it to night; did not trust himself to look up once at the shrewd, benevolent face of his father above it on the wall. "He thinks it is his last night in the homestead," thought Margaret.

But presently Garrick and his undertaking faded out of her mind as she sewed. Her own affairs had trouble enough in them; and as for heroism, she had come out of a hurly-burly in which the very

air, she had fancied, was made up of the breaths of men dying heroically for causes which they thought good.

Mr. Streblng meanwhile watched her critically as he sat, and chafed his hands softly. He was a connoisseur in woman, but this was a new type. He could not make up his mind whether the pale, full, high-featured face was German or Indian; he could not make up his mind whether it was dull from stolidity or from the repression of passionate, electric energy; at times he called the large, firm, white figure with its slow and strong motions, its heavy crown of black hair, its solitary expression in full, half closed gray eyes - simply coarse; and again he doubted whether a true artist would not have chosen it as a rare type for a grand primeval woman; whether any petty graces could equal this absolute freedom, this power in rest or motion.

"You are going to leave us to-morrow, Miss Conrad?" breaking silence, "your filial affection supports you through great perils."

To which she made answer in her slow, grave way, bringing all down to the levellest commonplace, that a flag of truce prevented all difficulty, and that it was not filial affection that brought her to Kentucky, but to sell the mules.

Aunt Laura gave an hysteric little scream. "But, Margaret, I did not understand this before. Surely it would have been better for your father to have risked all greater danger for himself, than to have suffered you to engage in such unwomanly work."

"I do not know about that; when there is work for me, I very seldom think whether other women have it to do or not. Some of them would not like it, perhaps; but I am a very good judge of mules, and the stock on the farm had to be sold or we should have lost it all. One army or the other had carried off half of it. I saw a dealer in Monticello, and told him he could have the remainder for a certain sum, and he paid me the money. As for Mr. Conrad, it was not fear that detained him; there was a reason why he could not come." The face looking up at Aunt Laura was as simple and honest as a child's, and looked child-like, for the moment, from some inward trouble that mastered it. But she dropped her eyes and kept her pain to herself.

"Dear! dear!" The old lady tapped the ends of her fingers together. Garrick was looking attentively at the girl, who had seen more of the world and of action in the past month than had entered into his whole life. Aunt Laura's wrinkled cheek grew hot; the lace strings of her cap fluttered; it was as well that he should be reminded of Miss Conrad's antecedents.

"What did your father do with his turf-horses when he entered the Methodist Conference, Margaret? Very finely blooded, his stock was, my brother always said."

"He kept the best of his stud," said the girl, folding up her work.

"Black Hawk gained a dozen premiums at State fairs before the war began. There is no reason why he should not own a good horse because he works for God?" with a smile.

Aunt Laura's lace fluttered more violently, but she only replied by a furtive glance of triumph at her nephew.

Mr. Strebling felt called to bring a soothing element into the conversation. He was a good-humored man, and dreaded the clashing of women's tongues.

"Fairs? Ah yes, my dear. That was another good thing to which this miserable war put an end. There's not a turn you can make from morning until night in which you are not met by inconvenience growing out of this gigantic mistake."

"I told you how it would be," sighed Aunt Laura, mildly. "My hands are clear—"

"But the most amazing point is the blindness of the North," pursued Mr. Strebling hastily, determined not to give up the track. "If we suffer in this manner, how much greater will be the loss there!"

"And all for free soil!" Aunt Laura brought in when he stopped for breath. "To prevent slavery on ground where it could not exist. An ideal negro in a hypothetical territory, as Alexander Stuart put it. I never understood the matter until I heard him. Now I do."

"Yes, my dear madam, yes!" blandly nodding. "But, as I observed, what is to become of the North shut off from us? It is a shop without patrons, a market without customers. Cut off from our supplies, too. Cottons, sugars, tobacco. Their mills will close, their operatives will rise—their streets will flow with blood!"

"I thought Philadelphia and New York unusually alive with business when I left," Margaret said, quietly.

"What could a child like you know of political ruin?" said Aunt Laura, with acerbity.

Mr. Strebling was suddenly silent; he began pacing up and down with long, uneven strides. The weather-cock, which he called a brain, was pointing another way. When he stopped, which he did presently, chafing his hands and smiling feebly, there was something in his voice which made Garrick look up, and reminded Margaret that it was an old man who stood before her.

"Philadelphia, my dear? You are going back again, eh? I had some friends there—some friends. I have often asked about them, but nobody seems to know them. Nobody seems to know if they are dead or alive."

"Who were they?" with a sudden deference in her tone. "Perhaps, I may know them. Unlikely things happen."

"No, my dear, no," resuming his slow walk. "There was a Quaker named Yates—a queer little body, who took an odd fancy to a mulatto boy of mine. But he died—Sap died."

"Was there any one else?" asked Margaret.

"No. A little girl that I took an interest in; a little girl. She would be a woman now—Rosslyn."

"A curious name," said Miss Conrad, kindly, humoring the old man's fancy. For the first time it occurred to her how little was done by anybody to humor him, how empty of pleasure and interest his life was. "If I should meet Rosslyn there, I will tell her that you remember her?"

He stopped on the hearth-rug, drawing his thin figure erect, and rubbing his chin nervously.

"You will not meet her, madam. Her name is Rosslyn Comly. Comly was a blacksmith. She was a market-huckster—she sold fish, I think. There is not one of my house hands that is not better clothed. They would look down on her work, and her company. No, Miss Conrad, you will not meet Rosslyn."

He spoke vehemently, and when he had finished an awkward silence fell on the little party.

It was broken by Cole, a middle aged, watchful-looking negro, who came through the half-open door. "Yer horse is ready, M's Garrick, ef yer goin over to Wairford's to-night."

"Why, Garrick! I thought you meant to sleep at home," cried Aunt Laura. "It is late, child," pulling out her watch.

"I ought to go," said Randolph. He rose slowly and stood with his hand on the mantle-shelf, glancing out at the light, with his grave, reserved, schoolmaster air, as Miss Conrad called it.

"He flinches!" she thought. "But many a good horse balks at the starting post."

She and the negro watched him keenly as he drew on his overcoat, slowly looking around the room. The fire light shone warmly on the cheap carpet; on the glossy, patched old sideboard with its display of massive plate; on the Copley and Allston hung over the faded wall paper; at Aunt Laura herself, with all the weight of the honor of the Pages in her lean, little body, and feebly dogmatic face. Commonplace furniture, and a weak old woman, to Miss Conrad, but they had a different meaning to him. They were sentient with the clean, sweet childhood he had spent among them, and the youth that followed.

Shrewd, wide-awake, town-bred fellows, full of pluck and energy, who pant for the day when they can cut loose from "the governor" and make their own way, can hardly understand what it cost the young Kentuckian to leave this homestead, never, in all probability, to come back. He thought to himself with a quiet, inward smile that it was like tearing a shell-fish fresh from its rock; some of the flesh and nerves would be left. Miss Conrad did not understand the meaning of the blue eyes that met hers as she bowed good-night, and went out to her own room.

"Afraid?" she said, astonished, to herself.

The Professor was not afraid. But it was such a short matter to say good-by! If he never came back, Aunt Laura would cry for a week or two, and his experiments on albumen with his class would never be finished; that was all. There was no enemy for him to leave behind, no woman's lips to kiss. "If the pitcher be broken at the fountain, it is one that has held but little water," he thought. All of Randolph's thoughts ran formally like sentences in books, and sounded to him generally, as if some one else had spoken them, there had been, so far, so little live pleasure and pain in them.

While Cole brought his horse to the steps, he stood looking out into the moonlight, holding his gloves in one hand, Aunt Laura and Mr. Strebling's patter of talk dully sounding behind him.

Once before, a boy fresh from college, he had left home, gone North to make a fortune. He crept out of the world he knew, the little clan of Lees and Pages, with their mild refinement, old rules, habits, anecdotes, even gestures, handed down from generation to generation. He was a crab, raw from its shell, bruised at every turn. He was stunned, bewildered with the jargon of new theories and facts; every man he met was a radical; the air, the language, the ideas were crude, untempered, coarse. What could he do? What he did do was to creep back home again; give up the idea of making a fortune and go back to his college class room to teach instead of to learn. He was going from under cover again, and if he won death in this venture it would be the first real stroke of work he had ever done, he thought, turning into the room to say good-by, with a sad, quizzical smile.

He kept the face of the dead man in the road before him as he would hold liquor to his lips to steady his nerve. This venture of his was a manly thing to do, a deed of derring do, on which his old father would have smiled grimly. "I would rather my son would die in a great cause, than live to comfort my old age," he had said, once.

When the war began, his son had theoretically called the struggle of the Government for life a great cause, but practically the Federal German mercenaries were laying waste his friend's plantations, so he had not gone to die with them.

He said good-night now, with another slow look around the room, and went out to mount his horse. As he settled himself in the saddle, "Oh, by the way, Cole," in his usual indolent drawl. "If I should not come back you'll find your free papers, yours and Viney's, made out, in my bureau drawer."

Cole touched his forehead. "I was aweer dey was drawed out accepable, M's Garrick. However, it might have been safer like if dey wos in our hands. We'd hev been here all de same of de day of your return."

"Aunt Laura has charge of them. Bring me a light." As he lit a cigar, the blacksmith stood, passing his stumpy, yellow fingers over the young man's leg, smoothing down the trousers. Randolph stooped suddenly, looking into the old man's face. His own changed.

"Why, Cole! You are not making a woman of yourself over me?"

The negro passed his hand over his eyes, standing up stiffly, "No, sah! But I nussed you, if you remember."

Garrick paused a moment; then he nervously straightened his hat and drew the bridle; holding out his hand, "Well, good-by, uncle," with an altered voice.

The old man gave him his blessing, in a whisper at first, then as he cantered off, rising into a class-leading voice, so loud as to bring Miss Conrad to an open window beside him. Cole improved his chance of an audience. "He's gone down into de plains of de great battle," swinging his hand toward the dusky horizon line at the north, and uttering the words in a shrill drone. "He's gone whar de smell of his brother's blood shell sicken his heart, an' his horse shell tramp among de slain of his people. But de young man's eyes is blinded. He knows it is God a treadin' out de wine press of his wrath, but he forgetteth de cause."

"Well, Uncle Cole, what is the cause?"

Margaret's cool, amused smile sobered him. He dropped the nasal twang, held up his old fur cap to his face, eyeing her shrewdly over it, as if doubtful how far to venture. "What am de cause why de rivers yander run wid blood, and de whole earth groan and am not quiet? In de meetin' our people asks dat of me. But I cannot tell. Dere is dem dat say"—the dull, black eye laid motionless on hers—"day say *I* am de cause, an my wife—not Viney, but de one I lef on a Georgy rice-field—she am de cause, an my boy, Pont, who was hunted wid dogs in de swamp down dar, he am de cause."

Miss Conrad's face hardened, and she looked through the man as though nothing interposed between her and the moonlight; the keen physical disgust in her blood to the black skin, as plain to his instinct, as if it had showed (which it did not) on her face.

"As if," she said, pointing to the figure of his master, cut clear against the sky as his horse rose on the hill-road, "as if God would bring countless young heads like that to the dust, that you might leave your corn and pork here, and starve in a Northern city!"

"You've seen de cullored people up dar," said Cole, breathlessly, not heeding her words. "I would like to see what freedom does for dem, Miss Marget."

"It does nothing for them," carelessly, remembering to whom she was speaking. "There are few of them like you, Uncle Cole—your

people. They are like Mose. He does light work here; he shaves beards, or whitewashes walls, or steals; he does the same in Philadelphia. He is thick-lipped and thriftless and affectionate, go where he will; only in the South they hunt him with dogs, and in the North they calculate how many years of competition with the white race it will need to sweep him and his like off of the face of the earth."

"Tank you, Miss Marget. Mose was allers a dreffil lazy nigger;" and Cole put on his cap over his bewildered face, and shambled off to the kitchen.

Miss Conrad looked after the broad, squat figure. "I let him feel the bit," she said, laughing to herself. "Cole was beginning to fancy himself one of God's people going out from Egypt, and Garrick's cattle would have suffered the loss." As she stood listening to the beat of Randolph's horse's hoofs on the far road, it occurred to her that Death was coming into almost every household in the land, as in the days of Pharaoh. Could it be in order that this thick-lipped, thriftless, good-hearted Mose should go free? The horse's feet echoed dully, going down on the other side of the hill, carrying his rider into the plain of the great battle, as Cole called it, justly enough. "And blood like his is to pay their ransom? If God does not make better use of Mose, free, than slave, He will have been a bad economist of the world's strength," she thought.

The last echo died faintly; she closed the window, and the farmhouse and sleeping fields were left in the night and silence; beyond the hill a grave, heavily-built man on horseback made his way cautiously, through thickets of scrub-oak, where sudden danger lurked past the slopes where glittered the white tents of the outposts of Zollicoffer's army.

CHAPTER V.

HUNTED DOWN.

One damp, drizzly evening in November, a lumbering old family carriage was drawn up on the muddy bank of a little hill creek in Marion county. The mulatto boy who drove it had watered the horses, and climbing up under shelter again, sat snugly wrapped in a man's gum overcoat, peering out at the dreary, darkening evening; the muddy sheet of water in front, swollen with the Fall rains; the low hill on the opposite bank overgrown with pawpaw and haw-bushes. It was a lonely, untravelled road; nothing of life was in sight but a rusty blackbird, that flew with a hoarse call over his head, and left him alone in the darkness. Pitt whistled shrilly and began to tug at the reins for a start, when a motion in the weeds on the opposite shore caught his rolling eyes. He stopped a moment,

then the whistle grew louder, and he squatted down, tying his shoes, watching the bushes from under the shadow of his hat. Presently he saw a white man, dressed only in muddy trousers and flannel shirt, his hair and beard ragged and uncombed, raise himself cautiously from behind the rock where he lay, listening, with his ear to the ground.

Pitt bent his own head; he fancied he could hear the beat of men's feet heavy in the soggy mud; they were on the other side of the scrub-grown hill, coming closer rapidly. The boy's whistle continued shrill and even; he lazily scraped the lumps of mud from the apron of the carriage, his eyes contracting like a cat's on the watch.

This was in November, 1861; the month when North and South met in a hand-to-hand fight to force her sham of neutrality from Kentucky. Their forces grappled each other in every county of the State, while the Kentuckians, compelled to take sides, stood defiant, suspicious of each other; had not many a man found an enemy in his brother or son, or an assassin in his neighbor? About the fireside, or at the family table, there was a chill of rancor in the air, more terrible than the heat of any battle. The keen sense of danger in all the border States made the atmosphere electric; the very children stood on guard; this mulatto, a dull drudge about the stables, before the war, took the life of the man yonder in his hand at an instant's challenge—cool, alert, cautious. There was not a breath of time to lose; the man crept to the bank feebly, while the steps behind him were both heavy and swift.

"Dem is Drigg's men; dey show no quarter, an' he's nigh run down;" while he scraped on at the mud, giving a quick, furtive sign to the man to take to the water, and indicating the course of the current by a swiftly-aimed bit of clay. "Dar's but one chance," drawing his breath sharply as he whistled. On this side of the creek, one or two miles inland, were the pickets thrown out by Thomas, then at Lebanon. On this side, he would be safe. But to reach it? He had plunged into the muddy river; only his face and hands, as he swam, were visible; but the boy's eyes were sharp. "He's starving. They've run him hard. He'll not make shore." The current was not deep, barely neck high, but, in the middle, strong. "He'll not make shore," seeing how it sucked him in, and that his strokes were ineffectual.

The men's voices could be heard coming round the bend; there were half a dozen of them, laughing and cursing the mud. The thicket detained them a moment, two being mounted. There was yet half of the width of the creek to cross, the man struggling in the current. The yellow water curdled thick in rings away from him; the drizzling mist which had been falling cleared off, leaving him barely within their guns' range.

The whistle came out of Pitt's dry mouth in one or two thin gasps, then stopped.

"Gor-a-mighty! he'll not make the shore!" he cried.

The silence lasted long after that. The thin face, with its draggled hair, set jaws and staring eyes, but slowly worked its way toward the bank, while fast and faster the steps hurried behind. Through all, he held something clenched in his left hand as h swam.

"What kin the man set agin his life?" Pitt, down on his knees in the mud with a log pushed out, snarled to him savagely to open his fist, and give himself headway, but Garrick smiled coolly. In the two weeks in which he had been dogged for his life, hungry, with frozen feet, creeping on his belly through thickets beset with Zollicoffer's scouts, this bullet in his hand had come to mean duty; to mean a good, high deed for the world's help, in the doing of which his life was a paltry thing to sacrifice. He had grown morbid about it, perhaps. Yet in the Kentucky parlors, with a bevy of commonplace women about him, he had always been a grave, diffident, reticent man; now, when Death had him by the throat, he smiled back gayly, brain and blood on flame with a new fire, the very essence of youth, freshly come to him.

He had almost gained the shore; the end of the log floated within his reach. He threw himself forward, missed it, and sank.

Pitt crept out on it cautiously, and, lying flat, thrust out his hand. Garrick caught it. He could hear the rustling of the dead leaves on the opposite bank, the men were so close upon him.

The icy water drove him back, lapping his legs and chest; the thick mud choking and blinding him, when, with all his gathered strength, he fought for footing on the shelving bank.

Death, was it?

He was on flame, possessed, shaken with that fierce animal courage which maddens men in the thick of battle; yet with it there was the vague consciousness that it was not his pursuers, nor the clammy current that he grappled with, but that treacherous thing whose dull weapons they were. A struggle, wrenching the breath from him, a leap, a yell of triumph, which died, fortunately, silent in his exhausted lungs, and then he dragged himself slowly on shore at the mulatto's feet, among the weeds and slime. He pulled up his knees, clasping his hands about them; the bullet rubbed rough in his shut palm; the face of the Yankee mechanic, dead, yonder, in the drift-way, rose plain before him. "I said I would do his work for him, and I've done it," muttered the Kentucky gentleman.

Pitt threw his rubber coat about him, his teeth chattering with excitement. "Gor-a-mighty, get up wid ye. Drive de wagon up to de house yonder. Don't mind me. Dis nigger'll be safe enuff!"

Garrick rose, stiffly, pausing a moment to consider.

"Git in!" whispered Pitt. "They're goin' to cross. Yere riskin' my life and your'n. In, I tell you."

Garrick mounted into the lad's place. Pitt stooped down to the muddy shore, breaking out again into his breathless whistle, as the old carriage began to go slowly up the road.

Garrick ventured to look out when he had reached the top of the hill. In the fog, creek, and fields, and sky were buried under one dull, colorless hue, the air itself swathing them down, muddy and wet. One or two lights began to twinkle in houses far beyond the line which had seemed to him to mark the horizon. He waited to see if the boy was safe.

The men on horseback had crossed, and were coming toward him. Their questions, between oaths, and the fog, failed to reach Randolph. Pitt's shrill treble was purposely pitched high.

"What am I 'bout?" lazily, "eels, I reckon," straightening himself, with his hand to his back.

"Anybody cross hyur? No, I didn't see anybody cross hyur. Who was it? Dar's no ford hyur; dar's de ford," pointing about half a mile up the creek. "I see a man skulking up dar."

"When?" The men reined up their horses, irresolute.

"Half an hour back, 's likely."

"If the cussed spy kept to the other side, Williams had him when he reached the ford. We'll beat the bush up. It will be but ten minutes' work. We kin come back and try, if the nigger's lying."

He had only a moment of respite, then.

The old horses jogged on heavily; one stopped to cough, and shake its steaming sides, when his life lay on each movement of its soggy feet! He could meet death in the river, but to be hung for a spy like a dog?

Life -actual man's life, which he was beginning to know in the strain and danger of these two weeks was drawn back from him. Starving and half-frozen as he had been through this adventure of his, it had dawned on him with a splendor of possibility which his boyish dreams even had never reached.

His nerves shook with fever; then with cold; a white flash of light filled the air. To be choked here by these ruffians? left dead like a rat in this mud? He let fall the reins, and opened and shut his hands, like a nervous woman. There was a stricture like an iron band about his throat, his wrists, his eyebrows. He looked after the group of dark figures disappearing in the mist. They would presently hem him in, trample out his soul from his body, as easily as that of a lizard under their heels.

His blood dilated, every nerve stung him. If he could lay his hand on them? He had strength to crush them into hell.

There was no cool, gritty endurance in Randolph's courage; as

he looked out of the fold of Pitt's great coat down at the creek bank and the men upon his trail, between love of life, and a fierce thirst for their blood, his face was gaunt and strained, and his eyes dull, as those of a man who has held down his passion too long.

Miss Conrad would have said the shell was only breaking off which had crusted over him in the old college library, from which he had been dragged, and that a few more touches of the knife would bring all that was in him of good or ill to the light.

The knife cut roughly and deep; if some traits and lines which only God had seen before, yawned sudden and black on the surface, it only proved that the chivalric gentleman bore a subtle kinship to us all beneath all difference of blood or color. They were not vicious traits; mean, only. Wrath against God even in that instant of supreme danger, for suffering his life to be so ignobly wasted; *his* life. The Randolph blood, his culture, his dainty, fastidious youth, the delicate, refined world of ideas he had made for himself—to be crushed out of life by men made in the image of brutes! The impregnable conceit of the man, his steely confidence in himself and his race, never were so bare or shameless as in that moment.

The horses stopped suddenly in front of a red brick house which stood back from the road, in a square acre lot full of withered beet and tomato beds, and decaying rows of hollyhocks and German asters; house and garden, wet, gray and desolate in the dark, driving mist. The house door opened, and two women, cloaked and hooded, came down the path, the slighter and taller of the two, in advance, with a light, firm step. She came to the wheel of the carriage, and tapped on the mountings; the white fingers were quick, decisive, the voice quiet, authoritative.

"Are you able to drive to Lebanon?"

The voice steadied Garrick back to his old self. "I will not drive to Lebanon. It is not your mulatto," pushing back his disguise. "I did not know there were women to be brought into trouble when I took his place," trying to pass her.

She put him back with a sharp gesture. "There is no time to lose. I saw it all from the window yonder. Silence!" turning to open the gate again for the lady who came feebly down the path. "She is old and weak. She must know nothing."

Garrick threw down the reins, pushing her aside roughly. "I did not know there were women. Am I sunk to that—that I would hide behind a woman's skirts? You shall not risk it. If this is to be the end, let it be the end."

She turned with a childish, angry click of her teeth. "Are you mad? In ten minutes the men will be upon us. I risk nothing. Be quiet and drive swiftly; leave the rest to me. We have passes. I risk nothing."

"You do not know me. Those ruffians called me a spy."

"What does it matter? I know that nothing can save you, if I do not. Those are Drigg's men." Her voice broke as if from sudden womanish terror; but when she turned to assist her companion into the carriage, it was again clear and courageous.

Randolph paused, his foot on the wheel. It was his only chance.

"I risk nothing," she whispered, putting him back gently, after she had closed the door. Then she sprang up to the seat behind him.

"Thee must drive quickly, Pitt," said the old lady.

"Turn to the right; the road is straight and level," interposed the girl's distinct tones. "There are but two miles between here and the Federal lines." Presently, she slipped a flask in his hand, which he found contained brandy.

It was like an intolerable nightmare upon him; the beating rain, the silence, the uneven black lines of fence wavering at either side as they passed, the gray strip of road in front, along which the horses jogged slowly; the death hurrying up behind. The liquor warmed his half-frozen body. He was conscious of something beside the sound of horses' hoofs, which began now to dully echo far behind; he began to remember that the bullet was still clenched in his hand; that he was wet, stiff, miserable, that—he was a coward. To sit there and let this woman save him? Did she risk her own life? Who was she?

With the tramp of the horses gaining on them every moment, keen curiosity about the woman began to work in his brain, to quicken his eyesight and hearing. Her motions and voice gave him an odd impression about her, for Randolph was susceptible to all solitary, morbid fancies. Through the night and danger she seemed to carry all youth and freshness; her voice might have belonged to good fortune, itself, it was so cheery, strong and sweet.

Was she good fortune? He was apt to search for omens.

There was a light broadly streaming across the road from a toll-house window; he would see her there; if her face was what he had fancied, he would take it as a promise—a prophecy of safety and honor, and success. This, while his own horses flagged, and those of his pursuers came closer. But Garrick was a man, and young.

The toll-house was reached, and while the keeper unbarred the gate, the light of his lantern fell on the black hood of her cloak; he could only catch beneath it the glimmer of yellow hair, and a curious contrast of soft brown eyes; then she pushed the hood aside, and looked at him; he saw the face full in the light. He had looked at many beautiful women before, unmoved, but now, he bent

forward with a deep breath; a shiver passed over him as of exquisite pleasure or pain. The girl smiled; the face bent out of the darkness beside her, with lips apart. A fastidious, delicate face, in spite of the mat about it of ragged beard and hair; blue eyes which were better fitted to express rare morbid shades of feeling than intellect. His lips moved, rather than spoke. "I had a strange fancy about you. Who are you?" A curious, hard expression passed over her face. "You may call me—Rosslyn Burley."

There was a shout, a trampling of hoofs on the other side of the gate, and in the next moment the carriage was surrounded, and a hand laid on Randolph's shoulder dragged the cloak from off his face.

CHAPTER VI.

THE DEAD SCOUT'S ENVOY.

FACE to face with danger in the shape of one man or a dozen, Garrick's blood told. He stepped quietly down among them, laying his hand on the pommel of the leader's saddle, saying:

"There is no need of this hubbub: I am your prisoner. The ladies must pass. I give you my word, they are not responsible for my presence here. They must pass."

A whisper from Rosslyn held the old lady in check.

"A light here, Grier." The young officer stooped from his saddle, while the toll-keeper flashed his lantern over the tall man, wet, in rags, holding himself up by the saddle-bow, his breath coming with laborious rattle through his lungs. He spoke with the sharp, disagreeable tone common to him when with his inferiors.

"The carriage must go on. You have no authority to detain these women, young man."

The officer raised himself again. "Who is this fellow, Friend Blanchard?" turning to the carriage door. "Your boy, Pitt, is here before you. I came to meet you, fearing you had been imposed upon. There is as much chance that he is a Rebel spy as one of our own scouts."

The old lady pulled the leather curtain apart, enough to show her

wrinkled face with a delicate, shrewd smile on it. If it had been her wedding, or her death day, you would have seen, in all probability, the same smile of keen-witted good temper.

"Thee must ask Rosslyn, Charles. It is an estray belonging to her and to Pitt. My *rôle*, I saw, was to be blind and dumb."

The officer's horse moved. Garrick staggered; grew dizzy; the pools of yellow mud at his feet, the night, the faces about him, became unreal as a dream. He stiffened himself, hearing his own voice hoarse and far off as he spoke.

"I am among friends, then?"

"You are within the Federal lines."

"He is no spy," said the cool, careless voice inside of the carriage. "Thee must be a bad judge of stock, Charles."

"What rank do you hold, sir?" Garrick addressed the young officer as he would one of his boys at school, and the young man answered involuntarily, as promptly as if he were one.

"I am Captain Charles Otey, of the Twelfth Kentucky, serving at present on Thomas' staff."

Garrick looked in his face a moment.

"I can trust you, I think. This is a dispatch; it must go to Thomas to-night. I wanted to end my work, but —" While Otey took the bullet from his hand, his head fell against the horse's flank. They crowded about him.

"You are ill?" Otey stooped to loosen his cravat.

"No. They pushed me hard, though; and I have eaten nothing for thirty-six hours."

Grier and the men hustled together, half carrying him into the toll-house. At the door he looked back at Rosslyn.

Otey rode up hurriedly to the carriage, the bullet close in his palm.

"I must push on. I will detail a guard for you, Friend Blanchard. Corporal!" The little red-headed man was all in a tremor of excitement.

"We must look after our estray, Charles; we will stay here," with a quizzical glance backward, pushing open the door. "Thy spy is one of the Page-Randolphs: that nose is unmistakable. Rosslyn carried the witch-hazel as usual, and, as usual, found the ore."

Otey curbed his mare impatiently. "Grier! There are comfortable rooms here: it may be better for you than going further in the rain. But you are mistaken as to the Page-Randolph; I happen to know this dispatch was to be sent by Lieutenant Smalley, one of Schoepf's men."

"Tut, tut, boy! I've detected blood that I knew in the fifth remove. A room for myself and Miss Burley, Mr. Grier, and a cup of coffee. I know thy good wife's coffee. And tell Mr. Randolph

I will be glad if he will breakfast with us in the morning, if he is able."

Otey shrugged his shoulders, and galloped off. Miss Burley mentally shrugged hers, and grew hot under her cloak as she followed the old lady's swift, stately steps into the low porch, and stood, afterward, by the fire inside, waiting. To her mind, she had done enough for this man, be he Randolph or Smalley. She wanted to go on, and wash her hands of him.

Ross Burley, every day, was as headlong as her blundering old grandfather in putting out her hands to anybody who was in the mine; whether man, woman, or beast, mattered nothing to her. There was a history in her fresh face. Under all the glamour of its loveliness there was a downright, honest look in it, that said, "What can I do for you? No one can need help as I once did." If she could serve you, her mother wit, the little knowledge for which she had worked so hard, her tender, delicate body, were to her only so much machinery for work. Until you, by some look like that of Garrick's to-night, recognized her beauty as not machinery. That lance rung challenge on her woman's shield; there was not an atom of the soft, tinted flesh in which her soul lay hidden that did not shrink, jealous and indignant, from the taint of homage.

It may have been some subtle remembrance of her father or mother's story that added this morbid pain to her sense of maidenly reserve. Standing now alone in the dull little parlor, she wrapped the cloak nervously closer about her. She caught sight of her face in the bleared mantel glass, and turned sharply away to hide it. Fair or foul, it was not for every man's eye to gloat on; it belonged to herself and ——. As she bent, looking into the fire, a pink flush stole up from her throat over the face; the brown eyes darkened into a dewy splendor; then she suddenly stood upright with a smile, and went forward to the opening door, shutting down out of sight the dream for which she herself had as yet no name.

CHAPTER VII.

IN, AND OUT OF THE CURRENT.

Garrick Randolph woke the next morning, with his face close on the square uncurtained window, behind which a chilly red dawn, unfolding over muddy stubble fields, lay like a picture in a frame. There was a gray horse tied by the steps outside; there were voices in the inn parlor, off which his chamber lay, and a glare of yellow candle-light levelled through the key-hole and under the door. He sprang out of bed, and began to dress, his muscles as supple and eyes as bright as if his night's heavy sleep had been a dip into some healing

water. His money had been strapped in a leather belt under his shirt; with some of it Grier had bought him clean and whole clothes; he dressed himself carefully, so that Otey, who had not looked beyond his arrogance and vagabond wet trousers and rags the night before, stood perplexed when a quiet, heavily-built man, in a decorous suit of brown cheviot, appeared in the parlor. Captain Otey held his hat in his hand; his boots were bespattered with mud; he walked impatiently, as he talked to Friend Blanchard and Miss Burley, up and down the room, in which the two sickly lights of candles and dawn struggled together.

"I have ridden hard, Friend Blanchard," addressing the Quakeress, who sat, her finger-tips crossed over her dove-colored dress. "We march in an hour. But I wished to tell Lieutenant Smalley myself that his name has been forwarded for promotion."

A queer, perplexed smile crept over Garrick's face as he gravely bowed; but his heart gave a sudden throb. He had won this reward, then, for the dead soldier? It was his first live, actual work; he turned this pay for it over in his hand as a boy might his first prize at school; it tasted for a moment like a morsel of sweet manna on his tongue. Then, not hearing Captain Otey's fluent praise of his bravery, but following him with amused, anxious eyes, "I did not expect promotion," he said, with an involuntary gesture, as if he took something in his hand. "It is—cumbersome."

He looked slowly around in his ordinary staid, grave way: the square room fixing itself in his memory, sharp and defined as a photograph; the glimmer of morning, where it had found Rosslyn's head rising out of her blue drapery, and rested there; the little, stately figure of the old Quakeress—her clear-cut face, with its white hair, and brilliant, questioning eyes under shaggy black brows, bent forward out of the shadow; then he turned to the little captain, coming up to him. Otey's was a peevish, but trusty face. Garrick put out his hand to detain him.

A voice like the tang, tang of a worn-out guitar broke in: "Now, Lieutenant Smalley is going to tell thee, Charles, that his name is Randolph, and that his mother was a Page."

"Yes. I never heard the name of Lieutenant Smalley until this moment. I found him dead, with his work nearly done; I only finished it. I claim the credit and reward for him; I claim the promotion for him also. You must help me in this matter, Captain Otey. I cannot show myself in the camp where he is known. I trust it to you, if there be any one who cares for him, that they know that he did good service, and died when it was done. I trust to you to keep my secret."

Ross drew a sudden breath, and half rose to her feet; Abigail Blanchard stroked her hands softly together with a fine, subtle smile; the little captain shifted his cap uneasily from one hand to another, looking up perplexed in Garrick's face.

"Impossible, sir, impossible! It is contrary to all usage or law to promote a dead man," dogmatically. "You wish no step for yourself?"

"I am not in the service."

"Well," relaxing his sandy brows as if the matter imported nothing; "it is no affair of mine. When I was a boy, I might have masqueraded also. But I will do what you wish. It is a trifle, and your secret."

"No, Rosslyn, thee need not frown; thee shall not wrong Charles Otey," when he was gone. "There is a gallant soul in the boy's little body, and a brain full of sheer common sense. But—Ach-h! Man cannot live on bread alone;" as she rose and came slowly toward Garrick, a sweet smile on the aged face, and a curious brilliance in the eyes. She stopped in front of him, quite silent for a moment, then held out her hand, saying:

"Last night I thought my old friend, Coyle Randolph, had left a son: now I know it. It is not his face only that I have found again."

Presently they sat down to breakfast together. Garrick was at home now, and possessed his soul in comfort, breathing his native air. His training and habits fitted him keenly to appreciate this woman, whom he had long known by tradition, and knew to have come to her inheritance of beauty and *esprit* in the days of Jefferson and Burr; a *grande dame* in that keen-witted circle, but who was now only white-haired Abigail Blanchard, misplacing her thees and thous with a piquant stateliness. The simple, subtle grace of a fine manner remained, as the delicate aroma with the dead flower. It made the morning air off from the muddy fields, gay, as well as fresh; it brought out all that was heartsome in the fire, the uncertain lights; it gave to the plain little breakfast the zest of a picnic.

He looked at his hands as he broke some bread, wondering if they were the same that had dragged him through the slush and mud yesterday; mud, and frosted feet, and nauseated stomach had sunk out of existence to-day—impossibilities in this world which the light, magic touches of the words of this old artist of society had summoned suddenly about him. She and the grave, beautiful girl opposite to him lived, he soon perceived, in an atmosphere of which he knew nothing. He drew his breath quickly as he gathered hint after hint, from their careless conversation, of what that atmosphere was; differing as widely from the bigoted *bonhomie* of educated Virginian life as Abigail Blanchard—with the keen insight in her liquid, hazel eyes, with the unadorned but faultless pink-tipped hands resting on the folds of her Quaker dress—did from Aunt Laura, generous, fussy and vain, the Page jewels still glittering on her wrinkled breast or fingers; or (and then the professor turned soberly to Rosslyn as to a new problem in equations) as this

girl—with her steady, brown eyes and sensitive mouth—did from the mocking, good-humored young women with whom he was at once contemptuous and awkward.

Garrick's plunge into coarse pain and activity from the heated air of his long seclusion had opened his mental pores, rendered him keenly susceptible to any new enthusiasm. Ross Burley wondered to see the broad-shouldered man who sat drinking cup after cup of strong black coffee, opposite to her, bend forward, his dreamy, blue eyes kindling like a child's at their last mention of their home life, so commonplace to her. But to the women he had known, the reality of life lay in the circuit of their county town: outside of that, the world was but a map; meaningless to them except for their geographies. This girl's education had been different; wherever her home might be, the air in it, he felt, was electric with energy; it was but a focus from which opened fields of work—fields where help was needed. There was no dormant, unused power in her brain; her companions had been men and women who entered the world as thorough-blooded competitors once sprang on the green, springy turf in the grand old games, every natural strength severely trained, every nerve pulsing with keen enjoyment; life itself a stretch before them, of which there was not an inch but should be conquered to yield to them its profit or its honor.

What if he went with them, as Friend Blanchard proposed, gayly? He had cut loose from all ties. Why not enter the service as he had vaguely purposed? She promised him a commission through the influence of her own and his father's friends. If he had a chance to breathe the stirring, vital air in which they had lived, it would be good for him, in soul and body. With all his self-satisfaction, he was uneasily conscious of this.

"It seems to me an altogether feasible plan," she said, as she ended her proposal. "We have been in Louisville for a month. I had business there, and I brought Miss Burley that she might meet a relative in the army. We return to Philadelphia at once. Thee must weigh the matter, and decide, Garrick."

It was natural for Garrick in weighing so grave a matter to remain silent; besides, he had no mind that women should suppose a man altered his whole course of life, unguided by some philosophic monitor within. So he sat, playing with his salt spoon with knitted brows, while they talked to each other, lingering over their cups as women love to do. He began to analyze the causes which had so differently affected society in the South and the North, and then he wondered how long it would take a bar of light, which shot through a knot-hole in the shutter, to disentangle itself from the paly gold of Rosslyn's hair. He waited until it had disentangled itself, then he wondered what blood she had—the Burleighs of Albany? It would need pure birth as well as the influences under which she had lived to

give her delicate head that poise of command, or to bestow the manner simple and *fin*, the like of which he had never seen before. He was a *connoisseur* in address; this bewildered, mastered him. A princess of the blood among her peers might be thus gravely natural and unconscious, but, below the highest rank, women must have an acquired polish, haughty or *gracieuse*, by which to assert themselves; that was the society maxim.

He wondered if she remembered what he owed to her? He would tell her some time when they were alone, that he had not forgotten. But she was going North—in half an hour would be gone. If he remained behind, they never, in all chance, would meet again.

Having spent a long enough time at his deliberation, he looked up with his boyish, frank smile—not at Miss Burley.

"You have prevailed," he said, holding out his hand to the Quakeress. "I will go. Though I would have taken up arms for the Government more readily if they had not invaded my State. But the Page-Randolphs must, as always, be Tories and loyal."

Friend Blanchard smiled, looking at him through half-shut eyes. "Pardon! but to us at the North thy contracted motive seems droll!"

The professor stood erect. "We differ," he said, nettled. "To me the war is a crime beginning in misconception, and to end in ruin. While to you—"

Her hand moved suddenly, irresolutely, and trembled as she adjusted the artistic bands of white hair about her forehead, but her voice was cool and guarded. "It is something different to us—to Rosslyn and me. At home we watch the regiments march past, day after day, and fancy it is a crusade, on which they go to recover something better than a sepulchre—liberty for the slave."

Randolph laughed, good-naturedly. The eternal, miserable negro! So precisely a woman's puny view, he thought, of a great political subversion!

"You have the Northern idea of slavery," he said, courteously.

"Yes." She unlocked a travelling satchel which lay on the floor, and took out a square bit of paper with a sketchy drawing on it. "This is my idea of it, Garrick." He took it to the window. It was the picture of an office in a Northern city; a candle flared on the desk; through the window shone a harvest moon. Two or three men stood about a packing-box, on the floor, with chisels in their hands, having just opened it. Half of the lid was off. Within lay, bent double, the figure of a negro; an old and white-haired man; dead. There were the marks of the branding-iron on his forehead and back of his neck. The face was sketched with wonderful power; it told the whole history of a man who had starved and toiled to the end of the long voyage, and died in sight of land.

"Trying to escape, eh?" said Garrick, still good-humoredly, with the knowledge of slavery as it really was, typified by Cole and his twenty other fat, lazy negroes at home, to make him forbearing with this slander. "How many such fictions as this are scattered like fire-brands through the land!"

"But this is true," said Ross, in her childlike, earnest way "There is room there, you see, for another figure. That was I."

"You? You saw this?" Randolph bent over the paper, the color changing on his face. "I am sorry to frame you even in fancy, Miss Burley, in a scene like this. Some Abolition den, doubtless."

"My grandfather's office," she said, simply. "All the fugitives from the underground railroad came there. I can show you the place when you come to Philadelphia," her eyes lighting, as if she spoke of holy ground. "I used to wait, always, thinking they might need a woman's help. And then—I wanted to see them draw their first free breath."

Abigail Blanchard watched, amused, the dumb amazement in Randolph's face. He looked, startled, at the girl from head to foot, a keener sense of her beauty forcing itself on him, and with it, the old Southern type of the Yankee, lank-legged, long-haired, with coat-tail flapping between his legs; the very man they would barrel up in Vicksburg, and "roll into the Mississip, on suspicion of running off niggers."

"I never have seen an Abolitionist like you," dryly.

She drew down her brows a moment, perplexed. "Almost all Northerners, now, are opposed to slavery. But they have not seen it as I have. Why," looking up at him, her voice sinking lower, "negroes have come to that office from every State in the South, in every disguise, in boxes, in bales, alive sometimes—sometimes dead. They have come maimed, scarred; with wounds that" her face grew white, and her brown eyes dilated with horror. She covered them, shivering. After a while she looked up, forcing a smile. "You will think us fanatics, Mr. Randolph. You know slavery only through your own kind mastership, perhaps. But I have had the ugly fact in my hands—in my hands"—holding them out as if to shake some clinging stain from them.

Garrick only noted the rose flush in their palms, and their nervous, slight grace, smiling to himself at words which, from a man, would have been insult and cant. Beauty, after all, he thought, was that magic ointment in the old story, which made gum seem amber, or coal a diamond. Then he looked closer at the paper.

"You did this?"

"Yes," taking it gently away. "But don't look at it. Slaveholders such as you, are not more in fault than we in the North."

Randolph's thoughts were far off from slaves or slaveholders.

There was the strength, the purpose, the passion of a man in every vigorous stroke of the drawing. He held it a moment, before giving it to her, looking keenly at the pliable mould of the brow, out of which the eyes looked gentle and friendly, at the sweet, merry contour of the mouth. Yet—

"Who knows my work, knows me," he said significantly.

The color, which came and went unceasingly on Ross' face, to show how straight her words came with it from her heart, drew a sudden, hot, angry veil over her bent forehead.

"You are right, no doubt," looking up in her simple, grave manner. "Yet the work is all, I think, which the world has a right to see; or, to judge;" and, folding up the paper, she went directly away.

Randolph stood uneasy, uncertain whether she meant a rebuke or not. He did not see her again, as he and Friend Blanchard determined that it would be better for him to go alone to Louisville. He rode over to Bardstown, therefore, and from thence to Louisville, waiting for them there a couple of days.

He had leisure in that time to settle back into his old costume; rich, brown cloth, fastidiously quiet; with which the rare mud-colored antique on his large white hand, harmonized; he found, too, a couple of bottles of genuine Romano Sherry, and a 1675 edition of Dugdale's "Baronage," in an auction room, both of which he stored away in his trunk, as pleased with his luck as a child.

The city was but a gate then through which the Federal troops were pouring into Kentucky and Tennessee; regiments of muscular lumbermen from Maine: Massachusetts lawyers and doctors, with spare, watchful faces: stolid, honest Pennsylvania Dutch: Iowans, New Yorkers, men from the shores of the great lakes, and from the prairies, with brawny bodies and clear, sensible eyes, swept in endless procession down the streets, or swarmed on the boats which floated down the broad, muddy river. It was his first glimpse into the great seething whirlpool. The tall, broad-backed, fine-coated professor, with his irritable mouth and gentle blue eyes, and his formal, old fashioned courtesy, was pushed to the curb-stone, or on the quay, by men alien to him in their creed, their past and their future. He began to be dully conscious of a mighty current sweeping by, which sucked in all the forces of the air and of life, while he lay, a bit of weed, on shore. Whether the Page-Randolphs were tories or not did not import so much, after all, perhaps. He blushed a little, too, as he thought of the sherry, and his Dugdale, as he might have done had he been detected in playing with a doll.

Friend Blanchard came at last, and they embarked on an empty steamer going up for troops to Pittsburg.

Ross Burley grew pale and shy when he came near her. It was

only the keen curiosity she felt, however. His manner had a repose in it, an exaggerated deference to women, peculiarly Southern, but new to her; it was the trait of a hero, doubtless. She relished, too, his risking his life for the honor of another man. The men she knew in the war from the North were fighting for an idea. Men generally, after their college days, cared little for each other personally; they kept their softer emotions for women. But Randolph would have died for a stranger. In her secret soul she called him Greatheart, and herself and Friend Blanchard, Mercy and Christiana. She thought how they were going now through that dark valley together, which lies close on the boundaries of hell. She had her old habit of making stories out of all that was about her.

To Randolph, the death about them was not so terrible as the spasm of turmoil. The boat floated up between banks of desolated homesteads, camps, landings heaped with army stores. In the night the red flames of burning dwellings or villages gave a ghastly light over the frozen fields; steamers met them unceasingly, with waving banners, triumphant music, laden to the water's edge with men hurrying to the battle-field; other boats swept silently before them, and in their wake, filled with gaunt-eyed spectres from the fever hospitals, or maimed wrecks of men going home to die. He was in the current, in the endless unrest and action, with no rudder in his hand.

The only point of rest was Rosslyn. He watched her, but seldom spoke. She was as a quiet Summer day in the midst of foul Winter. The invisible circle of respect and homage, too, which Abigail Blanchard's old-school etiquette drew about the young beauty suited his chivalric fancy.

Rosslyn? Rosslyn? The name had a clean, clear ring in it which became her. It annoyed him that Strebling had called some huckster whom he knew by the same. It tainted the word. For Strebling's look, even, to fall on a woman was, in Garrick's mind, to leave a stain upon her.

The days crept on.

Friend Blanchard grew restless. She sat in the mornings on the rounded deck of the boat, watching uneasily Ross' light, blue-clad figure down among the women of the deck passengers, or Garrick, haughtily alone, in his solitary walk up and down the cabin. There was a caustic, sad smile on her face.

"His brain is cobwebbed with as many musty traditions as Dugdale itself," glancing down at the old book on her lap.

Yet what would be the end of shutting up together this man and woman, young, with strong, groping instincts, ambitious purposes? On a boat, too, where the very drifting,—drifting, the slow floating out of night into dawn, through day into night, would

subtly suggest a longer and a closer journey? The Quakeress' sincere eyes became wells of anxious trouble. Ross seemed to her always, a child, whose soul she had in keeping.

"What does he know of the girl, except that her eyes are limpid and her hair golden in the sun? There is antipathy between them, in their habits, their birth, in the teaching of every day of their lives. God set them apart, in the hour when He breathed life into their nostrils. If they form a marriage on the basis of golden hair and tender eyes, they will find the truth—when it is too late."

CHAPTER VIII.

IN THE HOUSE OF THE SURGEON.

"But, my dear Miss Conrad, the man gambles!"

"That is probable."

"There is no such desperate play in Philadelphia as at Doctor Broderip's *petit soupers*."

"But the suppers?"

Mrs. Ottley shrugged her faded eyebrows. "How should I know? Women are barred out. They are too tame a sauce to season his *ragout*. The suppers are perfection, I dare say; I have the word of the town for it. The town keeps its eyes on him and his doings. That is the reason why I am annoyed that you went to him so openly. If you had employed a third person—me, for instance—"

Miss Conrad placidly buttoned her glove.

"He is a scoffer at all religion; he never enjoys his own bitter wit except when he is sneering at things pure and holy." The lady's little hands were lifted, her little flounces rustled indignantly, and her faded little face reddened. Miss Conrad was adjusting her shawl as if she had not heard her.

"Let me urge you not to go. His turf-horses—"

"Dear Mrs. Ottley, I carried a betting-book to a course when I was but ten years old. If the man have the skill in his fingers for which he has credit, what does it matter to me, after I have used it, whether he throws dice, or tinkles a guitar with them?"

"Oh, nobody questions his skill. It is scarcely two years since he came here from New York, and his operations have been wonderful as miracles; but—" She stopped.

"That is all that I care to know."

"Nothing of the quack either, Mr. Ottley says; he rules himself within the strictest etiquette of the profession. But," she lowered her voice, "what do you say of a man who refuses to practise when the whim seizes him? who will turn away from the bedside of a wretched cripple with a coarse joke about the disease being

the only part worth scrutiny, and that the sooner such candles were snuffed out, the better? Who is he, to give life, or refuse it, according to his prejudice?"

Miss Conrad, as usual, was imperturbable.

"The man, as a man, is nothing to me. I have put great hopes in him as an oculist. It is so long since this film has been growing in Mr. Conrad's eyes—we have tried so many different physicians—I had hoped that this Doctor Broderip—"

Mrs. Ottley leaned forward, surprised and curious, from her sofa. She fancied that Margaret's face grew paler, talking of her father, and emotion might as soon be looked for in a machine of wood.

"Dear child! dear child! I can understand what a loss it is to you both! Though your father is no longer a young man, it is time to look for the decay of his faculties. Let me see! Mr. Ottley first knew your father in '39. What a mercy, my dear girl, by the way, that Mr. Conrad never married again?"

Miss Conrad's gray eyes were cool and on guard, though they never turned toward her hostess.

"How can I tell that?" with a dogged simplicity.

The lady changed her ground quickly, recovering herself with ease, finding her foot upon her native heath of gossip.

"Mr. Ottley could tell you tales of Doctor Broderip's extortion, if he pleased. There is a great outcry of praise about his free hospitals, but his wealthy patients pay for them, I can assure you. I have heard Mr. Ottley himself tell him that his hands were as merciless as the devil's, when he had a fat fowl to pluck. That was only a man's way of talking, you know, my dear. But he only returned one of his grim, cunning smiles. His look quite makes me shudder. I always think what if I were lying mangled, fastened to a board, with that little, hard, cruel face over me, and a knife in his hand. Did not it quite make you shudder, Miss Conrad?"

Margaret paused a moment, thinking. "I believe that I do not remember his face at all," she said, slowly. "Our interview was very short. There was an ante-room full of patients waiting, and I was not thinking of his looks. I was anxious—"

Again the sudden stop, and this time Mrs. Ottley saw her put her hand up to her throat. She spoke to her, but Margaret did not answer.

The little lady fluttered to her fernery in the window, turning her back that she might not see the girl's distress. "Poor child!" she said, under her breath.

"It is so long since his sight left him," Miss Conrad said, controlling her voice. "And I feel as if to-day would be the decisive end of it all. It will all be decided to-day."

Mrs. Ottley, looking back at her furtively, saw her head bent, and her eyes fixed on the floor.

"I had not thought, Margaret," she said, gently, "how much this man's opinion would matter to you, or I would not have retailed the town gossip about him."

"Yes, it does matter. One physician after another has referred us to him as the highest authority on that peculiar disease; and whatever his sentence may be, I will accept it as final. If we could have come to him sooner— But Mr. Conrad had heard the stories you tell of his extortion. That was why the meeting between them had to be managed, even now, by a trick."

"I understand."

Miss Conrad looked at her watch. "We shall be late," she said, going to the door opening into the little breakfast room where lunch was spread. Her father, who had no mind to be cheated out of old habits, always made his dinner of that meal. He was munching his last bit of cheese, and talking vigorously and loudly to Mr. Ottley, who sat playing with his fork, and laughing. The two men were excellent chums together. They had been boys in a surveyor's corps together on the western frontier, and had an inexhaustible fund of stories in common about Indian hunts, and mounds, and tricks. They had just finished recalling one of these reminiscences of unusually strong flavor, when Margaret came in, and stood with her hand on the back of her father's chair.

"Mr. Conrad will be late," with a significant look to her host.

"Come, Hugh, dear."

"Yes, Meg, yes. Well, well!" with a gruff, racy chuckle, "I never heard that story before, Ottley. But them Chippewas were genooine snakes, to be sure! I've had considerable insight into human nature, and I always said, 'For sheer deviltry, give me a red-skin; for applejack or deviltry, give me a red-skin.'"

"It is half education," said Mr. Ottley, laying down his napkin.

"Well—yes. Now there's yourself," leaning on his elbows on the table, his coarse, high-featured face twinkling with humor. "There never was two gawkier boys than you and me, Brooks; we was rough-conditioned throughout. I often think what thirty years has done to us. Here are you; you've got a dumpling, contented little body in a snugly feathered nest, and all that you've learned in these thirty years is packed safe in your brain, and looking out of them keen, little black eyes of yours; you've got your operas, and your old portraits, and your marbles. And here am I. Now them saplins was alike, Ottley, in pith and rind. It's the sile that has altered them—it's only the sile."

"It was a strong, marly soil, then, that gave you your pith, Hugh," said Ottley, suddenly, with an admiring look at the old man's rough-hewn face. Margaret nodded over her father's head to him, quick and pleased, a blush coming up through her thick, white skin, which no lover's words had ever been able to stir there.

But the old Methodist, fluent enough to talk of others, was modest as a girl about himself.

"Yes, I'm tough," dryly. "We're a long-lived stock. There was my father and his four brothers, now. They lived until the sap dried up in them; they used to 'mind me of wood hardened into iron, them men. As for their opinions—well, the idees they got from their mother along with their bones, them they died with, unaltered. I couldn't fancy them men mouldering, even in their coffins."

"I shouldn't call you an obstinate man, Conrad," as they pushed their chairs back, and got up.

"I don't know. My mother's blood might tell in me. The Randalls were all loose-j'inted. But Meg here, now, she's her grandfather through and through. Meg's pethy."

She began to adjust the wisps of gray hair on either side of his face, and retied his cravat, managing to reach it with ease, as she was a tall woman, and he, short and broadly built.

"She's putting on the halter, you see, Brooks. I intended to go down to court with you, but she has heard of a bidder for that tract near Dubuque, and made an appointment for me with him this afternoon."

Mr. Ottley's fat, good humored face grew anxious.

"I must hear the result, Miss Conrad," meaningly. "You will come back?"

"Yes."

"It is a matter of no moment. I don't care to sell. Eh! What are you doing, child?" as she drew off the spectacles that concealed his half-closed eyes, and put them in their case.

"I like it best so, Hugh. Let me have my way."

His whole face had contracted painfully. "You shall have your way, Margaret, always. But I wanted them hid; I did not wish to be an object of loathing to the passers-by," in an undertone. She turned sharply, and laid the palms of her hands on the sightless eyes. This very slight gesture from the stoical woman touched Ottley to the heart: it was as if she gathered the rough, helpless man into her very soul; put herself forever between him and all hurt. Conrad noticed it only by a change in color.

"You must not go out to your little lodge, to-night," urged Ottley. "There are two or three men coming to dine with us whom I wish you to meet, Conrad," thinking that they might relish, as he did, the old preacher's stories, as they would a mouthful of heavy tart cider among dry, light wines.

Conrad hesitated. "No, Brooks, I think not. I don't meet strangers as I used. I'm suspicious or peevish, as I was with Meg just now. It's this," touching his eyes with thumb and finger. "You can't understand, Ottley, what it is to have one of your

senses gone—how it galls. It puts me in mind of a trick we had out in the backwoods, of leaning a hickory twig loosely against a pine. The big tree always began to rot from that little pint. I just fancy old Death now leaning out of the other place with his staff touchin the one spot in my body. He's entered an appearance, eh? as you lawyers would put it," with a chuckle.

"I would not nurse such morbid fancies," said Ottley, as they shook hands.

"Morbid? As weak as a hysteric, sickly woman's! I know it." He heard Mrs. Ottley's dress rustle, and went forward to bid her good-by, standing in the doorway with his felt hat in both his hands, as she talked to him. Even with his eyes closed, the high-cheek bones, and curve of the strong jaws gave to his pale face the sagacity and keenness of a watch-dog's. He was a favorite with the little lady, as with all women: there was a quizzical gentleness in his manner to them as if they were little children. The truth is, they were so to him; all women, alike; beautiful, and innocent as children.

"You are going to consult Doctor Broderip?" she asked, in spite of her husband's frowns and nods.

"No, madam, I fear not. I thought of it. But I cannot afford to waste them few dollars I'd laid by for Meg, now that I can't work to replace them. It was the last chance. But it was only a chance, after all."

"Well, good-by, and God bless you!" said Ottley, hurrying them away from his wife out to the carriage in waiting.

"Good-by," said Mrs. Ottley. The God-bless-you stuck in her throat: it was a thin throat, covered with frippery, not used to weighty utterances: but she meant it.

Mr. Conrad gave himself up to a nap when they were seated, bidding Margaret waken him before they came to the house. She sat looking out at the houses and people on the sidewalks, remembering how her father had planned this journey for them both since she was a child. She could remember sitting on his knee by the hour to hear him tell of the adventures which were to befall them, when they came East, to the great cities. The thronged streets, the windows heaped with jewels and sheeny silks, the glitter of the fountains, the music, the trained birds, spangled Harlequin and Columbine: he had crowded them all together to make an actual fairy land for her.

They were here now, and the fairy land had resolved itself into the dull platitudes of the streets of this overgrown village; into one dreary surgeon's ante-room after another, where she sat, while his eyes had been burned and lanced, rousing no trace of pain on his sallow, set face.

He asked no questions about the new scenes around him; his

jokes, his anecdotes bore, unusually, the peculiar flavor of his camping-grounds out West; she fancied that some unexpressed feeling growing out of his blindness kept him silent; for, but a year or two ago, he had come back from a week's visit to Ottley exhilarated as a boy, with the suggestive life and ideas into which he had been plunged; sorting and combating them with his own. Every new sight or word had been like a nut then kept for him to crack and enjoy during the Winter that followed, in the evenings with Margaret, bringing some kernel of sound common sense out of each.

But, on this visit, he left his boarding-house only for the surgeon's room; listened in silence, if Margaret spoke, which she rarely did, of the concerts or picture galleries to which they took her; avoided as much as was compatible with his old-fashioned courtesy, the invitations of Mr. Ottley or his set.

Now, all this was not natural to his wholesome, hearty temperament: she knew that. What if Death had touched him in the loss of that one sense? "The big tree began to rot from that little point." She had noted those words, to day, echoing an older fear.

As soon as this fancy first came to her, about three weeks before, she had gone to actual driving work, according to her habit; had induced him to rent a small farm on the railroad running through the valley of the Schuylkill. She had suggested to him how much might be done among the colliers near by; brought him in contact with some members of the Conference. He had pricked his ears like a war-horse scenting the battle; it was hardly a month ago, but already he had established prayer meetings, a class, Sunday visitations to the jail and alms-house, and a promising quarrel with John Berkett, who was Presiding Elder, on the question of personal sanctification. So far as revivals went, Mr. Conrad was a Methodist of the Methodists. He had taken Ottley to one on the last Sunday, and while the lawyer's half closed black eyes surveyed the audience, hiding a polite sneer, Conrad had listened to the mingled prayers, hymns, and screams with a grim, sympathetic smile.

The farm, too, filled their hands with work, though they only intended to occupy it for one year: there was a basket of new tools, and papers of seeds in the bottom of the hack now.

Farm, and alms-houses and desultory preaching, however, were but makeshifts for his old active life with the people of his bishopric, as he called the bounds of his itinerancy; where for forty years he had lived among them as stock-raiser and preacher: there was not a child in the circuit who did not know his keen, sallow face. A poor makeshift: she knew that, as he did.

It began to rain as they drove over the cobble stones; the shops took in their cheerful, gaudy drapery and the gas began to shine from their dingy recesses, the gutters splashed mud, the drops fell like dull weeping on the carriage windows and ran, trickling, down.

Margaret Conrad bent forward, her elbow on her knee, her steady gray eyes looking up at the sleeping man beside her. Her brain was crowded full of plans, hurrying eagerly forward, to fill up the gap in his life, if this last chance failed. She could so stand between him and the world, that he would never know the loss of his sight. She never over or undervalued herself, but she felt her own full strength, to-day, in will, in the very tension of her powerful muscles: she believed if Death himself were coming to this old man beside her, she could hold him back, keep him off. There was no emotion in her face: the pulses in her thick, white throat, and firm wrist were even and full, but she stooped until her face rubbed on the brawny, hairy hand flattened on his knee, thinking of the years when she had gone to sleep every night, hugging it, in her little crib. It was the caress of a dog or some animal, dumb until death to utter its love.

They turned into Broad street; in the northern part of which Doctor Broderip lived. She looked out at the steep manufactories swarming with human life, at the gaping dépôts, the rushing trains sweeping to and fro within: then the great boulevard opened beyond between a phalanx of stately dwellings, differing from the dull rank and file of Philadelphia houses, in that each looked down into the broad, miry street with a separate, independent life of its own, often full of suggestive beauty in color and outline. But the wide road, and rows of leafless trees and dwellings were but faintly sketched through the wet Indian-inky air, as a half-faded photograph.

She saw, at the end of a square, the heavy brown house of the surgeon, surrounded by wide gardens, stables, hot-houses; in half an hour she would know all: her father's life and her own would be mapped out. Any other woman would have shivered from cold, and, perhaps, begun to cry. Miss Conrad sat erect, and touched her father's shoulder to waken him. Something in his face when sleeping would have told you that he was blind: he suffered nothing to betray it when awake. She paused, thinking how many people thought he was callous to his loss. She knew the keen zest for physical life in every nerve and bone of him: she knew what a savage wrench of pain the loss had cost him, conceal it under what good-humored joke he would. He was an Indian in stoicism; but he was an Indian in his relish for the use of sight and smell, and palate, also, to tell it all. The blood of his youth had been rank and violent, she had heard; there was no decay in him now. He had nearly reached the age when life is ordinarily a burden: but he could preach his three sermons a week, walk his ten miles, and saw a load of wood with any man. The boys who served under him (for he had gone out under the first year's call), boasted that he had the nose of a pointer, and the eye of a hawk: in his Confer-

ence he was put forward as their most powerful, resolute debater; "one of God's own bull-dogs" they called him.

She remembered all this, suddenly, when she wakened him, and he started up pulling his hat over his eyes, instead of turning to the light. It never before came to her so clearly, all that it had cost him to sit down in the middle of his journey, forever in the dark, with hands and feet tied.

There was a crowd of liveried coachmen about the iron railings in front of the garden; the carriages waited, empty, in the street; their hack stopped, and Miss Conrad led her father up the narrow walk.

The ante-room into which they passed out of the mud and rain, opened to them like a bit of Summer; the light came warm and tinted through stained windows on the snowy India matting and light cane furniture; there were ivy and orchidæ drooping from the delicate panelling on the walls, feathery mosses trailing over the windows; one side of the room opened through sliding doors into a conservatory, where beds rose over beds of field grasses and brilliant flowers. A bright-eyed, graceful dog lay dozing on a crimson mat, some birds chirped and pecked at a plate of fruit, the very atmosphere was bright and perfumed as with a gale of health. Inside was a larger apartment in which half-a-dozen women, apparently attendants upon patients, waited. Beyond, extending through the entire left wing of the building, were the private operating rooms; the doors between them were, however, jealously closed.

Mr. Conrad turned his head quickly from side to side. "It is like a June day. That is the twit of a finch, do you hear, Meg? There are sweet peas and vernal grass; we have no such smell in our western fields. What kind of man is this bidder of yours? Where is the dog?" sharply, without waiting for an answer, turning his face, pointer-like, as his keen scent stood in lieu of sight to him.

"Here!" holding out his hand, which the dog instantly obeyed. "It's a thoroughbred pointer," passing his hand over its jaws.

Miss Conrad answered at random. She was listening to the carriages, as after slow delay, they rolled away one by one, the group in the waiting-room growing gradually less.

They were all gone at last. The afternoon had crept on toward evening. Her father sat silent, playing with the dog. She could perceive the gathering twilight and storm without by the heavier shadows through the artificial bloom and heat; a door at last—from one of the furthest operating rooms—opened, and the small, insignificant figure of a man in gray entered and came quickly toward them.

He bowed to Miss Conrad, and seated himself in front of her father, dexterously contriving that the light should fall directly on the old man's half-shut, unsheltered eyes.

"I have detained you tediously; I beg pardon," in a sharp, business-like tone. "But our little matter does not require long consideration. I have invested largely, heretofore, in Western lands, and always with success. What is this tract you have to sell?"

"I reckon you've bought on speculation, before?" leisurely leaning back with his thumbs in his waistcoat sleeve-holes. "Mining or oil claims, it's probable?"

"Yes."

"Then mine will not suit you," gruffly. "It is only arable land. I hold it at its maximum value. I'll not deceive you. I kept it only for my horses."

The surgeon had been bending slightly forward, his light, hazel eyes fixed on the sightless ones before him; but he sat up at this, saying, dogmatically,

"Unless your horses were mere roadsters, that herbage was too succulent. Any turf horse would grow flabby on it."

"For turf horses, I grant you," said Conrad, eagerly. "But I would use that Western grass as I would the warm blood of the Justin Morgans—to temper cold, roomy Canadian or Norman breeds, eh?"

"Morgan?" with a sneer. "A second rate, doubtful strain of blood, do what you will with it. It is in keeping with the American character—this outcry for its inferior flash merit. It is driving all thoroughbreds to the wall."

"I know it, sir! I know it!" eagerly. "But what can I do? Time was, that my word carried weight in any training-ground in Kentucky; but I'm only on the circuit now, and –" He half raised his hand to his eyes, and let it fall. "Besides, in Ohio and Iowa, except some drops of old Sir Archy's blood, the stables are in a poor condition."

"Kentucky? There was a horse in Kentucky in '55—Henry Perritt—"

"A three-year old! I know! Beat Lexington's time in a two-mile heat. Well, sir, he was ridden to death on the Metairie course. I owned a colt myself—one of the Timoleon stock—that promised as fair as Perritt, but he was lamed in the cars."

"Uninsured?"

"Yes. But it was not the money loss I cared for," his face flushing purple. "I was a small better; but to see them two creturs of mine—that was as dear to me then as Meg is now – come in, winners, to the starting post, their eyes flashing, their nerves quivering! It's worth livin' for—a minit like that!"

"I have some stock I'd like to show you," said the surgeon, rising suddenly. "There are very few men that I admit to my stables, but—"

Conrad got up eagerly. "You may trust me, sir, you may trust me," with a quick, cordial laugh. "I'm more akin to the hosses than to most men I see. My hat, Margaret, my hat!"

The little surgeon buttoned his long skirted gray coat about his spare figure, while Miss Conrad, laying her muff aside, brought his hickory stick and hat to her father. He thrust the gloves which were in the crown into his pocket, muttering something about "rubbish," then, striking his palms together,

"Well, sir, well! I'm ready! I've not seen a decent bit of horse-flesh since I came here. They say there are some pretty trotters down on the Point Breeze course, but my eyes are in my finger-ends now. I must touch them to know. How far is it?"

"But a step, and under cover."

Miss Conrad for the first time was scanning the celebrated surgeon with her opaque, gray eyes as he stood drawing a flesh-colored pair of gloves on his delicate hands. It was an insignificant, slight-featured face. "Cruel and hard?" She could hardly call it that, and yet - The confusing, hazel eyes suddenly turned on her; she was doubly perplexed.

Whatever he might be outside of his stables, so far as they were concerned, he was eager and childish as her father, she saw. The two men had struck fire on one point of contact; both their faces were heated.

"You will not find it dull to wait for us here?" Doctor Broderip said, gravely bowing to Margaret.

"Meg could not go with us?" ventured the old man.

"I would prefer she should not."

He gave no reason, and the tone was peevish and sharp.

"Surely! surely! But she's a capital eye for a horse, Meg has," as they went out through the conservatory. "She finds more music in the neigh of one than in all your opera tin-tink-ling."

There was a small door at the back of the conservatory, leading into a narrow passage which ended in the stables. The surgeon paused at the entrance. Old Conrad had pulled out a thick cigar and was proceeding to light it. Broderip touched it impatiently with his finger. "Not until we are clear of the stables, if you please. My house is at your service to smoke in, but the horses do not like it."

Conrad laughed, good humoredly. "You've the right feeling for them—the right feeling. You never use tobacco, I know," turning suddenly.

"No. How did you know it?"

"Well, now," said Conrad, crumbling his cigar and letting it fall, "it *was* curous how I knowed that. It was by my hearing. I knowed that by your voice."

Broderip made no reply. He stood with the key fitted in the

lock, looking back over his shoulder, the anxious, irritable look on his face with which a sensitive woman sees a finger laid on the habits or whims behind which she hides.

"I knowed it by your voice," in his lazy, amused tone. "It's a peeoolar voice, did you know?" turning his sagacious, blind face down toward the smaller man. "The minit you spoke I noticed it. It's sharp and wiry, but there's a deal hid under that—I wouldn't like to say what. I never heerd but one like it. When you came in to-night I said to myself that's John Pritchard's double."

"What sort of man was my double?" the key turning in the lock.

"If you can imagine a feller miserably poor, with an inordinate hungry brain, and the nerves and longings of a woman, and no self-confidence to cover them, going about, stung and bruised at every turn, cut to the quick by every chance word—"

"Enough! enough!" laughed the surgeon. "Your spectre is ghastly. My ghost even would have a heartier look, I fancy. Here are the horses."

"But tobacco affects you as it did him, I'll wager," insisted Conrad, doggedly. "He dared not use any stimulant; it was like setting fire to veins filled with spirit."

"What became of Pritchard?" said the surgeon, carelessly, as with his hand on the old man's elbow he guided him between the stalls.

"Of John, eh? John? Well, now, do you know, the feeling on me is so strong of your likeness to him that I'd rather not tell you the end of that man. I'm a superstitious old fogy, maybe; but it would be like holding up a picture of your own death, it seems to me."

"As you will," laughing again; but the heartiness had gone out of the laugh. "Here are the horses."

It needed but a moment to drive all superstitious fancies from old Conrad's brain. The stables were high and wide, daintily kept as a lady's boudoir. There were trifles, showing a jealous care for the comfort of the animals, such as many men do not give to their wives.

Mr. Conrad had his coat collar thrown back—his shirt sleeves pushed up, and was passing his hands rapidly over the horses, giving vent at intervals to grunts of doubt or pleasure.

"Bay, this filly is, eh? How about the color of the legs? I put a good deal of stress on the color of the legs. Blazed with white? Bad! bad!"

"Now, this," said the surgeon, bringing him to a stall set apart, in which stood a chestnut colt, "this colt I bought last June. It belonged to one of the Petries, of Louisiana. The fellow thought

that its cannon-bone was injured," with a chuckle. "He gave half a dozen likely negroes for it two months before. That colt cost me, sir, just one-third of its value." The repeated derisive chuckle was distasteful to the old preacher's coarse grained sense of honor: he pulled his hat on roughly, but said nothing. "I've his pedigree back to the Byerly Turk. Feel his back," triumphantly pointing to a protuberance behind the shoulders.

"It's the Bedford hump!" exclaimed Conrad, his annoyance forgotten. "Eclipse and Black Maria had it. Ah, ah! This is the breed, sir!" and then followed the usual jargon of clean withers, keen muzzle, broad bellows room, etc.

"So, so, my beauty! A nutty brown, hey? There's no coarse hairs here," sliding a critical finger down the back bone. "Satiny and cool. I'll wager, now, that colt has an eye in his head as brilliant and innocent as any woman's."

The surgeon drew the silky, thin mane through his fingers once or twice, then he led the colt back into its stall. "As a woman's? I'd be sorry if his ideas were not cleaner and honester than women's —as I know them. I saw one woman, lately," after a pause, as he adjusted a loose bed of straw, near to the horse, "who put me in mind of Prince Hal, here: I never saw but the one. She might be vicious in temper, but she was as sensitive, as honest, and as game; as loyal, too," joining Conrad, and keeping his eye fixed on his face to see the effect of his words. "If that woman once cared for a man she would run her race, without wincing, to serve his interest or pride, until she fell dead under the spur, as a thoroughbred will do."

"I could almost think I knew the woman you mean," said Conrad, carelessly. "Shall we go in? I'm obleeged to you," touching his hat with his old-fashioned politeness, "for showing me that colt. A new horse is like a new friend to me. Why, sir, I've a mare that I ride on circuit at home, and do you know, that from the day my sight left me, that creetur approached me differently? She knowed. When I can see again, I think I'll tell the good news first to old Jin; after Meg."

The surgeon had stopped, leaning against the wall, playing with a halter that hung there; he looked in a furtive, side-long way at the old man, a queer, half-subdued emotion on his face.

"Mr. Conrad," he said, with a sudden change in his voice, "I did not bring you here to look at the horses, altogether; I had another matter to talk of; a secret, in fact, not of my own, but your daughter's." He hurried on without noticing the old man's startled exclamation.

"I am a surgeon, brought necessarily in contact with the diseased, in temperament, as well as body, and I have made it a rule to shun all secrecy or deception with patients: as I would a diet of false stimulants. 'Blunt words and sharp knives,' I tell my pupils."

Conrad was silent a moment, turning his hat in a perplexed, uncertain way. "A surgeon, eh? That's a good rule for a surgeon or any man. But Meg? I don't comprehend you."

"My name is Broderip."

"Broderip? And a surgeon!"

"Yes."

"I understand," with a change of color, pulling his gray whiskers, uncertainly. "Margaret consulted you?"

"About two weeks ago she called on me."

"Poor Meg!" still stroking the bushy beard. The heat had gone out of his pale, high-featured face, and he kept the diseased eyes tightly shut. "Poor Meg," he said again, with a short, uneasy laugh.

"It is just two weeks since Miss Conrad first came to me," said Doctor Broderip, in the same subdued voice, still playing idly with the halter, and looking at it. "She came in the morning, early in the morning—I always take note of the hour when I first meet a person; it has its meaning—it has its meaning."

"Eh? I beg pardon," anxiously. "You speak low."

The surgeon looked up. "Your daughter gave me," in a suddenly sharp, business-like tone, "a clear diagnosis of the case—remarkably clear for a woman; she told me that you had refused to consult me, because—"

Conrad turned quickly. "You need not hesitate. I had not the means. Poverty is no disgrace."

The little man shrugged his narrow shoulders, and made a grimace, but Conrad saw neither. If Broderip's greedy extortion when a rich patient fell into his clutches, was as surely reckoned on in the city, as the skill and keenness of his scalpel, it was a trait of which he evidently was not ashamed.

"Miss Conrad's suggestion," he resumed, "was, that I should see you under cover of some assumed business, and so decide upon the chance of relief. I saw you to-day at her desire."

"My girl did not know, Doctor Broderip," standing stiff as a corporal, "the favor she asked, when she planned an opinion from you, clandestine-like. She's fond of her father beyond the common; and she don't stop for anything where he's concerned. We've been intimate, Meg and me, as if she was a young man. I'm obleeged that you humored her, Doctor Broderip."

"I humored her—yes," with an odd smile.

There was a long silence after this. The old man drew himself erect, his broad shoulders growing heavy to him, his hands clasped behind him, his face straight forward—like a grenadier waiting for the death shot or pardon.

Broderip, hearing his heavy breathing, lifted his sallow little face slowly from the strip of leather which he lazily twisted in

coils at his feet, a half-pitiful smile on his thin lips; he watched the old man turn toward him restlessly again and again, but he did not speak.

"You have decided on my case, then?" said Conrad, at last, in a guttural voice.

"It needed but a glance to do that, Mr. Conrad," in as gentle and tender a tone as he would use to a child.

The old man did not speak for a moment. "You have—there' no chance for me?"

"None."

Conrad turned, and suddenly walked down the stable between the stalls to a narrow window. He put out one groping hand, holding it straight before him, and stood motionless there, his back toward Broderip, who looked compassionately after him for a moment, and then hung the bridle up, carefully polishing an embossed bit of silver with his glove. He waited patiently till the old man came back, his face composed, but pale, speaking in an exaggerated, loud tone. Broderip's, on the contrary, was curiously gentle.

"There's a sharp wind outside. It yells like as if 'twas off sea."

"Yes."

"Does Meg know of the end of it?"

"No. How could she?"

"Sure enough. I wonder what—what she'll say? There's a long road for her and me to travel together now."

Doctor Broderip hesitated. "What if you spared her for a little while longer? A woman can bear any pain if you give her time for breath. Let me treat for a short time with you for your land—"

Conrad threw out his hand. "No; I couldn't act it out. Let me go home now. I'll tell her when I've had a minit to think it over. And then we'll never speak of it agin. That's the way with Meg when anything hurts her."

He walked past the little man to the door, and then recollecting himself, turned with a cordial smile, holding out his hand. "I'm a rude old hoosier. Another time I'll thank you for your hospitality, and—"

Broderip interrupted him, with a slight color marked in his sallow cheek. "There was one matter, part of Miss Conrad's plan, which I should mention," hesitating.

Conrad turned, attentive.

"She spoke," said the surgeon, with an amused laugh, "of a fee. I think she had some dread of my claims in that particular. She had an idea of making over some property of her own unknown to you."

Conrad rubbed his hands softly together, but did not speak.

"There is no fee, now. No!" lifting his hand with the irritated

pettishness of a child. "There was no cure. That is my rule. Do not interrupt me, if you please. But when your daughter left my ante-room, she dropped an ornament that she wore, a peculiar little bracelet. I have it here." He held something in his hand as he spoke, glancing at it furtively. "It suited the hour in the morning at which she came, it suited her, or my idea about her, and her errand. I would like to beg it of her. It did so fit in with my whim of the moment when I saw her, that it would be of more absolute value to me than that land of hers in Kentucky. I am full of whims," with a boyish laugh.

Conrad's shrewd face was bent toward him with as keen a scrutiny on it as though he yet could see.

"I understand you. You don't want to leave the obligation on us. It's a delicate thing to do—that."

"You do me more than justice. It is a pretty toy"—turning it over and over in his hand, abstractedly.

It might have been a charm, by the curious change which it worked on his pale, insignificant face. It grew, slowly, fine nerved and wistful as a woman's, the protruding forehead lowered, a rare, subtle intellect looked out of the hazel eyes, which were usually but a shining, confusing mask; the mouth moved, irritable and tender.

"Keep the bracelet, surely," said Conrad. "Poor Meg has no jewels, but it may remind you of the time when the way in which you gave a favor was kinder than the kindness itself. I'll reckelect it after you do, I know."

"I'll beg it of her when I know her better. It's a delicate little toy," said Broderip again, letting it drop slowly over his fingers, in the twilight, the curious smile deepening, and driving the habitual lower from his face.

The bauble was but a string of rose-colored shells, linked with gold, but as they caught the dull light, they broke and increased it in their delicate pink curves a thousand times, until Broderip coiled up the chain carefully as though it were one of the old talismans of the genii which for him who possessed it would turn all things to gold.

CHAPTER IX.

COYLE RANDOLPH'S WILL.

ABIGAIL BLANCHARD determined to remain on the boat while it made its uncertain way up the Ohio, in preference to travelling by railroad.

They were long, cold, drowsy days which followed. The air was heavy with the gathering December snows; the sky overhead was opaque and gray. The little stern-wheel, Messenger, ploughed herself a path but slowly through the masses of mud and ice which choked the broad, sluggish river.

The old lady and Rosslyn found a cosy corner for themselves every day on deck, where, cloaked and hooded, they could see the yellow foam which curdled out into the water as they floated along; or above that, where the pearly twilight and the soft glimmer and sparkle of the falling snow filled the air to the very ends of the earth. Low, sullen hills crouched along shore; between them there were glimpses of open, rolling slopes of wood and pasture, white and silent in the snow, or of stern mountain peaks, with the gray smoke from the farm-houses at their base, blown and drifted across their sides. But it was all dumb, dim, white, and phantasmal as a country seen in sleep.

"Let us alone!" cried the old lady, with a childish shrug of delight, when Randolph proposed they should land and go by rail to their journey's end. "I will not lose a moment of my Sabbath day. This is drowsy old music, played over and over again, making one,

> With half shut eyes, ever to seem
> Falling asleep in a half dream."

The voices of the crew could seldom be heard above in the little cabin, which, with its quiet, its cheerful compactness, its two or three easy chairs drawn about the wood fire, crackling in the open stove, made a home picture inside of the shifting, cold landscape without.

The professor would look around it with keen, boyish enjoyment.

"We have left this miserable, bloody work quite behind us," he used to say every day to Friend Blanchard, stroking his beard complacently, at which she only smiled.

Yet, when even she was glad of the momentary respite in which to take breath, could Garrick be blamed if he rejoiced to find his muscles and brain alike sinking down again into their normal stupor? This hurly-burly of work or war might be needed for the masses, but the cultured soul grew in quiet, or, as he expressed it, to Abigail, "The plebeian Jacob cheated and wrestled for his blessing, but Abraham waited patient until the evening, and the gods came and abode with him."

At which she laughed again; nor even replied, when he assured her sententiously, that "Too great action was the curse of the North; it had destroyed their social manners, as well as their politics and religion." None of the crude notions of the young fellow would tempt her into argument to break the quiet of her holiday.

So the long, cold, dreamy days crept by. In all his life afterward, Garrick Randolph looked back on them as lifted up, and set apart from all the years before; a light, like that of their own crimson sunsets shining through the snow, a sound, like that of the inarticulate music which floated sometimes to him off from shore, giving a strange, unreal glamour to them. For, under the snow and sunsets, and slow, drifting silence, there was an undefinable something, a pain and pleasure, restless, causeless, coming and gone like the wind; an unknown heat in his blood, an unknown thirst for he knew not what; a vexing, goading disquiet which charmed and alarmed him.

Yet they were commonplace, monotonous days enough, apparently. He came out from his stateroom to the quiet little breakfast with Rosslyn and her friend; then he paced the deck or sat by the fire, studying the new theory of forces, until the afternoon's long, inconsequent talk with the Quakeress, while she sat wrapped in her cloak on

deck, the keen black eyes and white hair set like a picture in the fur hood; Rosslyn beside her.

He very seldom talked with Miss Burley. But he flattered himself that he had an artist's eye, and for that reason liked to note how the frosty wind had brought out the clear crimson tint on her cheeks, or to watch her step as she paced the deck. Sometimes she sat in the cabin, and sewed at some dainty white stuff while he and Friend Blanchard held their long gossips.

She was a very simple-hearted girl, he thought, easily read as a page in her own Bible, and just as pure. She had no petty little blushes or affectations with which to recognize him as a man, young, and not unattractive. He had been used to such little decoys. The last of the Page-Randolphs was a hero among his kin, and he had cause to know it. But this girl spoke to the tobacco-spitting captain or Sam, the cook, with just the same simple courtesy. It did not nettle him. It was the reticence, yet hospitality of manner of a princess of the blood, as he said before. Her birth, doubtless, gave it to her. Some day, perhaps, the king's son would come; the hero who always ends the fairy story, and the princess would grow shy and distant; even vain, maybe, like other women, and jealous, lest her beauty should not be rare in his eyes.

In the long, drowsy evenings, playing chess with the old lady, glancing now and then across the glowing coals at this rare beauty, he had nothing better to do than to wonder what manner of man the coming hero would be. Every day, as he saw her in new lights, his fancy about him changed. Sometimes, when he was in his berth, the boat rocking him gently to and fro, and the throbs of the engine sounding beneath him, he could not sleep for thinking of it.

About the same period, by a curious coincidence, Garrick Randolph, for the first time in his life, began to cherish occasionally an ill opinion of himself.

Now, Friend Blanchard never argued, and took but a dull interest in the antagonism of forces; what could they do but gossip? She belonged, however, to the high Brahmin caste of gossips; the world had been a picture gallery for her, and if you looked back at it through her eyes, you saw groups, posed and draped with an artist's touch, wonderful for their absurdity or pathos. She humored the young man too; photographed the Randolphs and Pages for him for two or three generations back. They had been influential, cultured, easy-livers; chivalric, also, according to the Southern code. When traits such as these were patent in her anecdotes, the professor would be apt to call her attention to the marked family features in his own face, his father's chin, his Uncle George's nose, with an unconscious vanity which keenly amused the old lady. She spoke of it to Rosslyn.

"That pride seems to me natural and proper," the girl said, with-

out smiling. She was leaning over the deck railing, her grave, brown eyes fixed on the water. "You taught me yourself that vice or virtue comes to us in the blood from our fathers. Why should he not thank God if his is clean?" She looked down at her own wrist, with the milky veins crossing on it; looked at it long and curiously, while the Quakeress watched her shrewdly from behind. After a while, she said: "Who is the Strebling that Mr. Randolph calls cousin?"

"James Strebling, of Alabama. Does thee know him, my dear? A flaccid, feeble fellow. His blood now, if thee talks of blood, is too pale material out of which to make either a sinner or a saint."

"No. I do not know him," said Ross, still looking at her wrist. After a minute or two she gently closed and unclosed her hand; the muscles under the fine flesh were like steel; the life throbbing in her broad bosom and through her lithe, delicate limbs was keen and genial, and exhilarated, as the spirit of pure wine.

"*I* am not flaccid. I will perforce be either a sinner or a saint," she thought to herself. After a while she suffered the unclean thing to drop out of the world, so far as her memory of it was concerned, according to her old habit, and began walking up and down, thinking of the unusual pleasure of the sunshine in the air, but more of some shirts she was making for her grandfather, singing in an undertone to herself.

The Quakeress looked after her with a fond, quizzical smile.

"The sky is blue, and the sun shines, to-day," she said. "What other good news has thee heard, Rosslyn?"

Ross laughed, but presently she came and sat down on a coil of rope at Friend Blanchard's feet, quite silent for a little while, then she looked up.

"You know that story I told you once? of——"

"I know! Thee need not name it, my child," her sensitive old face in a tremor, as she stroked the girl's shining hair. "Has anything hurt thee, Ross?"

"James Strebling was that man. But *I* do not know him. It is the Burley blood that is in my veins, and that is good and pure," lifting her face proudly.

The next evening, when they were sitting by the stove together, Randolph brought up the subject of the Streblings again, but Ross was not in hearing. The old lady was in the mood for gossip.

"It was a curious chance that kept thy property out of Jeems Strebling's hands," she said.

Randolph flushed as if from a blow in the face. "I do not understand. What claim had he upon it?"

"Thee has never heard the story?" with surprise. "I am sorry that I mentioned it then, Garrick. No claim, in my opinion; yet there were many to cry out at one time that he had not a claim, but a

right to all thy father had to give thee outside of the homestead."

"What do you mean, Friend Blanchard?" uneasily shifting his position.

She poised her finger tips together, looking with her black, bright eyes in the fire—relish of expectation all over her piquant, wrinkled face. "It is a long-ago matter, and there is no need of filling thy memory with old stories. But if thee will — Thy father was no favorite with his father, thee knows?"

He shook his head. She had put her finger on the raw flesh when she touched the inalienable honor or dignity of his family. Perhaps she knew it, for she kept it there maliciously.

"Coyle Randolph was but as other Southern boys. There was nothing which I should not tell to his son. He had a trenchant wit, sang a good song, drank good wine, betted heavily on his horse; these things are costly, thee knows. They cost his promise of success at the bar, they cost a duel or two, and more money than his father would furnish, at the last. I was there, a young matron then, visiting Laura Page. It was a miserable succession of duns, of tyrannical rebuke on thy grandfather's side, and fierce rebellion on his son's. The end of it was, that Coyle Randolph left the plantation, swearing never to return, and that day, while in the heat of his passion, his father disinherited him."

"He threatened it, you probably mean. The Randolph property is large, but I value it chiefly because it never was alienated from the direct line. It came intact from father to son."

"It was alienated that night, Garrick. I know it, because, unwillingly enough, I was one of the witnesses to the will. By it the entire property was devised to his nephew, James Strebling, with the exception of the house, which belonged to Coyle from his mother. But only the shell of the house. The old man was merciless. The old furniture, which for thee, Garrick, is precious with memories, the pictures, the plate, every trifle which gave the boy name or place, was taken from him. He was left a beggar."

"It was but a passing whim. How long was it before he destroyed the will?"

She hesitated. "This occurred but a month before thy grandfather's death. I do not know when he destroyed the will. He died suddenly, as thee has heard, in the night, and alone. Up to that day, he had shown no sign of relenting."

Randolph turned sharply a dull, perplexed look on her. "Do you mean that the will — I do not understand."

"Nor do I," briskly. "It was muddy ground throughout. I never could find a clean path through it. The will was in a cabinet in thy grandfather's chamber, to which only he had access. He, and his body-servant, a negro named Hugh."

"O, I know Hugh!" with a look of relief, as if he had touched

land at last. "Hugh is on the place now—he's a sort of odd hand, carpenter, locksmith, what not. He has a knack for tools or machinery."

"The same man. Well, when the old man died, Hugh was in the room before any of the household. Thy father was at the county races near by, and reached home that night. When search was made for the will, it was gone." She had grown interested in her own story, and leaned forward, her eyes still on the fire, her hands slowly tapping together. "The will was gone. Now, where did it go?" looking up abruptly in Randolph's face. "Coyle said that it had been destroyed when his father's affection returned to him. But it never returned. There was no relenting to the last day—no relenting," slowly shaking her head.

"What became of the paper, then?"

"Many persons believed," the words dropping out slowly, "that the negro alone knew. He was brought up with Coyle, they were foster-brothers, indeed, and it was thought that, on finding his master dead, he had made way with the paper, and kept his own counsel."

The story was a startling and suggestive one to Garrick; it had touched him deeper than he cared to show—touched him most, in this new picture of the frank-faced, sturdy young fellow who sang a good song, and told a good story, and betted and fought with the best; who had been a grave, temperate, shrill-voiced old man when Garrick had known and loved him. He almost fancied he was standing yonder in the gathering shadows, nearer akin to himself than ever before.

"I like to hear you talk of my father as a young man," he said, with an unsteady smile. "It is as if he had come back to tell me something of himself which he had forgotten to do when here."

Abigail Blanchard's eyes lighted as she watched the heavy figure of the man opposite to her, his head drooped on his chest, the red firelight playing over the sensitive, credulous face.

"I am thankful," she said energetically, "that no hint of such a suspicion ever reached thy father. His idea of honor would have made him surrender the property to James Strebling, if he had been convinced the will was destroyed by the negro, and not by the old man."

"Certainly. What else was there for him to do? The property must have gone to Strebling."

After a while, he said slowly, "But few people ever understood my father—there are some men always at odds with the world. But you interpret him rightly," his face kindling.

"Coyle and I were children together." She said no more, and he sat motionless, his hand upon his mouth; nothing broke the silence but the driving sleet against the windows on the hurricane deck

above. He took up the tongs at last, and drove them against the wood in the grate, a shower of fiery sparks flickering out into the darkness.

"Your story clings to me like a nightmare," rising with a forced laugh. "What if James Strebling stood in my place—held even my negroes, say? Why, they have been born and died side by side with the Randolphs for generations! Think of Bob Strebling the master of the garden my father and mother planted, of the chairs on which they sat, of their faces on the wall, of their dead bodies in their graves!" The thin cabin floor creaked under his heavy steps as he paced up and down.

"Here are the lights and Rosslyn. Let the old story go with all nightmares."

But he walked on without heeding, stopping at last in front of her. "I wish I had known that fellow Hugh had ever been a favorite of my father's. He's had but a rough berth of it in his loft over the wood-shed, I'm afraid. My overseer always thought that, if the worn-out, out-door hands got their rations, it was enough, without coddling them, and I left matters to him too much -too much. I've had more hard study laid out for me than most men. It was my proper work, in fact. I put the rest aside."

She did not reply, but turned to Rosslyn, who came in all aglow and laughing from the cold, and bent down, holding out her hands to the blaze.

For the first time Randolph took no note of her presence. "That old fellow, Hugh, had a wife who belonged to Strebling," he said, "and one or two children a boy about my age—Sap. I remember it all now. They were sold or died, I forget which; at all events he never took another wife. He has been a silent, stoop-shouldered old negro, pottering about the carpenter's shop since I can first remember. He used to turn tops for me, and rig my boats. But I preferred to hang about the other old gray-heads, who cracked their jokes or sang while they rubbed down the horses. I wish I had known this fellow was a favorite of my father's."

"It is not yet too late. Let the matter wait," said Abigail Blanchard, gently.

She found the simple-hearted Kentuckian tedious at times. He turned one idea over and over, like an overgrown boy, until it was worn to shreds. She wondered to see how patiently Ross listened to his prosing. But Ross' palate was fresh. She had not tasted so many kinds of wine as the old society gourmand.

Once, however, several days afterward, Randolph's talk became worse than tedious to the girl. It cut her like the lash of an ox-thong. It was in reference to this very subject of the will, to which he went back uneasily, day after day.

They had reached Pittsburg, and were standing on the deck

watching the crowd of drays and workmen on the wharf, when he pointed to a stolid-looking porter, rolling a barrel over the plank below.

"Now, if that will had been found," he said musingly, "I should have been as sheer a beggar as that boor. In worse condition, perhaps, for I would have had tastes and wishes ungratified, which he never knew."

"Thee could have earned thy bread and butter," dryly.

He shrugged his shoulders, stroking his golden brown whiskers with his large white hand.

"I never discovered the advantage which accrued to a man from the necessity of working for his daily livelihood. Whatever energy it develops could have been called out by nobler motives. The mean economy and cares of poverty degrade a man. They invariably degrade a man, and harden a woman."

Rosslyn turned sharply. The professor looked at her with a calm, reflective smile. How pure and soft were the brown eyes suddenly lifted to his! They were new to him every hour. Inexplicable meanings were those which gathered in them. He went below, muttering some line of Schiller's, of how that her *Blick* was *himmlischmild*, and some other adjectives which he would not have had hardihood to use to himself in English.

Now, neither Ross Burley's eyes or temper were *himmlischmild* just now, when the people to whom she belonged were attacked. But the unconscious Randolph, when he joined them in the dépôt while they were waiting for the train, half an hour later, only thought how pearl-like her singular purity and fairness shone among the coatings of soot, and foulness of the room about her. He directed her attention to the throng of men outside of the wide door, cracking their whips, rolling barrels of oil, beating on the wheels of the engine. He could not let the subject go. It was the Southern creed, after all, which he had drawn in with his mother's milk. "Talk of working for daily bread?" he said. "The more I see of the North, the more I am convinced of the necessity of a fixed aristocracy for this country. I mean a class that need not expend its strength for the means of subsistence, who can serve as a model and arbiter for the others. Such an one can only come from generations of culture. There must be thorough breeding, from the brain, to the motion of a hand, or the control of an eye. We have chosen our rulers from among tailors and rail-splitters long enough."

Ross Burley's head fell at that. There was not a slip-shod servant-girl or greasy porter hurrying by, who was not akin to herself in birth and breeding. Usually she was not slow to defend her order; what ailed her to-day that her face lost all trace of courage, and her eyes seemed weighted with dulness? Yet something she must say.

She put her hand on a little girl who stood near her with a basket of musty cakes, her clothes smeared with soot and the rank oil.

"Now, the Bourbon blood might be hidden even under that," she said, smiling.

Garrick gave the child some money, and pushed her away. "Never. Coarse sights and sounds, such as her class know, leave marks which never wash away, Miss Burley. Vulgar training is the damned spot that will not out, whether you put its possessor in the White House or the Tuileries. That is fact, theorize as you please."

Miss Burley made no answer. How could she? In the market and alleys where she had lived, she had known sights and sounds which would bring a blush to this young man's cheek. His memory was like snow beside her own. He had been born heir to education and refinement which she had coined the best days of her life into hard cash to buy. And yet—

They were in the train at last, driving beyond the furthest suburbs, along the narrow, black line that girdled the glittering ridges of snowy hills, and the endless duller white slopes between.

She remembered that she had crossed the mountains through yonder gap on a Winter's day like this, long ago. It was a different way of travelling, and different company! Her heart swelled under her jacket, her throat choked. If she could sit down now, up in her make-believe house in the great Conestoga wagon, and put her head again on the broad old knee!

She thought of him as she had seen him down yonder, two weeks ago, in the door of his tent, waving his old hickory stick to her good-by; and when she ran back for another kiss and hug, how he had laughed at her!

"Cheer up, little sister!" he said. "Yer grandad 'll come safe out of this trouble, you count on that! Why, who've you got but me? Ther's just you an' me in the world, Rossline!" He broke down at that, though he laughed louder. But she had seen the tears lodged in his black, stubbly cheeks.

Ross felt the tears now on her own face. She muffled herself up in her veil. "God counts him of as noble birth as any of them!" she cried, hotly, to herself. The "Good Man," as she had called Him long ago, was juster and more liberal! He had another honor by which to test men than learning, or their birth among pictures and music, and in the midst of delicate living. He knew whether or not the stains of those old days had gone into her soul, never to wash away! He had been one of her order; it was they by whom He had been loved, they watched Him at the cross, they died for Him! The earth was His now, and the fulness thereof—these great slopes—the snow that hid them—

Ross, like all unreasoning women, lapsed at a touch from one

depth of feeling to another. She grew suddenly quiet; her heart filled with the strength, with the very glow and sparkle of life. It was as if they had pushed her into the outer ditch, and she had found Him there. She held His very hands—her feet rested on His great world with her old sense of firm right. It did not matter so much if some of His people were fouled in their cradles with oil or with vice!

Looking up, she saw Garrick's earnest, boyish eyes riveted on her face, and smiled brightly back at him. She knew the abyss between them now, and she never would suffer herself to forget it. With her own place, she was content.

Shortly after which he leaned back, and fell asleep, satisfied that he had found some of the "Bourbon blood" in the world, at last, in her. His own possession of it, he never had doubted.

CHAPTER X.

AMONG THE MOUNTAINS.

The Japanese thrust a gritty mould into the shell of the oyster, which checks its life slowly. But when the bloodless thing is dead, they find in the shell a pearl in the likeness of one of their gods. There is such a mould thrust somewhere into the lives of all of us—human oysters—if we only know what use to make of it. It came first to work this "sea change" in Garrick Randolph's life, in a day which he spent among the mountains.

The matter was ordinary enough. The snow had drifted into the ravines, and half a dozen transportation trains lay blocked at Harrisburg, filled with troops. This was on the 24th of December.

"I will not take Rosslyn further until the way is clear," Friend Blanchard said, decisively. "There is a village two miles before us where the mountains are gathered in as solemn state as the dead kings in Hades. We will spend our Christmas at Rockville."

Randolph assented courteously, secretly chafing, according to the manner of men, at being checked in the middle of his journey. The Quakeress was a charming old woman, and Miss Burley as charming in another view. But he had left home to do a man's work. Was he to spend his life dallying by their sides, gipsying through the country in this fashion?

They stopped at a little lath and plaster house, looking like a rabbit's burrow, under one of the mountains. Rosslyn was sent inside to treat with the woman.

"Miss Burley is skilful at managing those people," said Garrick loftily. "She speaks to everybody in their own *patois*, like a born diplomat."

"She looks at everybody through their best trait, so all the world stands at ease with her," said the old lady, sharply.

There were only women to treat with; the men were gone to the war. They were not sorry to make a little money, or to find Christmas coming to the gate with such an unexpected jolly face. They gave up their two or three rooms, clean and bare and cold, and went to work with zest, to build great fires in them, and to bring out their sheets and blue woolen counterpanes to spread on the piled feather beds. Besides, Ross' good humor and delight were infectious. The whole little house began to glow, what with the novel warmth, and flash of the fires, and her fun and laughter, up stairs and down. "She believed Christmas himself lived among these mountains," she told the old lady, rubbing her hands, and turning out the contents of the valise to find her a looser house dress, her eyes dancing. She went out with Jane, the whey-skinned, sour-looking house-daughter, to find a monster turkey in some of the neighboring farm-houses, and brought her home, both of them laden, their faces red and bright. Jane's mother, who was over the stove, her skirt tucked up, cooking a famous supper, made an excuse to bring her into the little kitchen (as clean as a Shaker meeting house) so that grandmother might hear her voice.

"And her face is just as sweet," said Mrs. Baldwin, as she put on the griddles for the batter-cakes. "It's got the genooine look in it, besides the pink and white and the yallar hair. Our Jane might have bin like her if she'd had that bringin up."

"Seems as if I'd heerd that v'ice afore," said the old woman, clicking her knitting-needles slower, "an' I'm never mistaken in a v'ice. Seems as if I'd heerd that afore."

Rosslyn went out again, her curls thrust up under a woolen cap, to the pine forest about the base of the mountain, and came back laden with branches of cedar, the scarlet fire-bush, and long wreaths of green, delicate colt's foot. She made two or three journeys, Jane helping her, and then they tacked it up about the little parlor.

When Garrick came down for tea, between the green wreathing the walls, and the still, glowing bed of coals in the grate, and the white little supper-table in the middle, and the vine-draped windows framing the wild, desolate landscape without, the quiet waiting-room was as warm and heartsome a home picture as one would see in a lifetime. It touched him oddly, with as much annoyance as pleasure. This girl carried home about with her, he believed. He had no mind just now to believe anything to her credit, or to think of her in any way. He had been nervous and irritable during the last two days, angry as a fly who fears its feet are caught in the web. This woman, or any woman, was nothing to him, he said to himself as he stood there waiting. If they had gone on, he would have bidden her good-by in Philadelphia by this time, and there would have been the end of it. His twinge of pain at the thought but made him angrier.

He was not going to marry a brown eye, and pink cheek! He was a man of long experience and reflection. He had his ideal of a wife, his rules of the birth, and training, and character-requisites. Unalterable rules; and just then, the supper came in. Jane told him that the Quaker lady was tired and cold, and would take tea in her own room.

"Miss Burley?"

Miss Burley was out.

He walked hastily to the window. The great shadows of the mountains had brought twilight already over the white wastes of snow, marked here and there only by a sunken fence or a brown stream creeping down to the river.

Where was she? It was a lonely, hill country. Even if there were no danger, she was but a childish, superstitious girl, he thought, and would be frightened at the solitude, and these uncanny shadows. He went to the door, anxiously, but saw her at that moment coming slowly up the road. Then he went hurriedly back to the fire; he had done all that courtesy demanded; but he bent over so that he could watch every step which brought her nearer. Her most careless motion always seemed to him as if it kept time to some music which he could not hear.

Presently she came in. He had never seen her in a house dress before. The loosened curls, the soft, sweeping folds of clear blue, the lace, like foam about her arching throat — well, it was a novel, pretty picture — what more? If Ross had heeded him, she would have thought the professor grim and peevish under his heavy politeness; but she did not notice him further than by a friendly smile. The shadow of the mountains was on her; she was silent and subdued.

Randolph placed her chair at the table, moved it again, nervously, opposite to his own. He wondered if she remembered that it was the first time they had ever been alone together; he wondered if she remembered that she had saved his life?

When she sat down behind the little coffee urn, and began to fill his cup, he thought that if his ideal wife had ever been found, she would probably have filled the central place in this scene to-day. She was to have been an olive-skinned, fragile woman, with coils of black hair, and a Greek nose. She would have been southern in birth and feeling; sensible; taking an interest in science. *She* never would have run with infidel Abolitionists or haunted the terminus of an underground railway.

Ross was quiet, indifferent; the novel pleasure of the day was gone, apparently, for her. He saw her glance now and then out at the graying valley below, where the dumb river lay motionless and patient under the drifting sleet, while the black, gigantic mountains shouldered each other, looking down.

"They seem like ghosts crowding about a grave," she thought, with a shiver.

He noted the darkening trouble in her eye with a fierce jealousy. What was she thinking of? What did he know of the million fancies and plans under that broad forehead; what her hopes were, whom she hated—or—loved? He was not of her kind; he had never even looked into the world she lived in; he was but an awkward book-worm; he had wasted over retorts and crucibles the years that might have made him a man worthy to be her friend. He did not know why he should address her coldly and formally, making every little courtesy of the table seem a covert rap intended to keep her at her proper distance; but he did it, and Ross, after a look of mild surprise, lapsed into silence, the look in her eyes growing more absent as she ate her supper, and watched the melancholy clouds gather about the pale, watery sunset.

An acute pain shot through his temples as he gulped down his strong coffee. He went on, according to his habit, turning the one idea over, and over, although it was one that tortured him. He never had known her true self—he never would. He was at liberty to look at the fair mask of hair, and eyes, and color, and to admire it: any boor on the street could do the same. But for her secret thought, her confidence, her love she held them hid away, kept for their master —— He choked: the drops he was swallowing grew bitter as gall to him. He resolutely bent his head, and when she spoke to him, answered with averted eyes.

The little fire crackled, the sleet, blown by the wind, struck sharply on the window pane: they fell into silence. In a word, the professor was struggling desperately to recover his old self. His senses were for the moment cleared, and he saw a different man taking possession, as it were, of his body; where were his reason, his prudence, his unalterable rules vanishing? The heat, the jealous passion that fevered and racked his brain, alarmed and disgusted him. The old fastidious, complacent spirit was not so far dead in him, that it could not sneer at the new comer angry and resentful.

He had meant some day to fall in love, and to marry. All men did so. But there should first have been an acquaintance of a year at least; love should have been based on a thorough respect, a keen sympathy in all tastes and opinions—

What was she thinking of now? The dark pupils of her eyes widened, and her forehead knitted as if she held back tears. She rose with some trivial apology she was going away indifferently; what did it matter to her that they were alone for the first time? that the great silent mountains, the deserts of snow, even the little, warm, cheerful room seemed to shut them in from the world.

They two, alone, together.

Ross was not going away. She only went to the window. She

had hard work to keep back the troublesome tears, as he guessed: tears, however, with which love and lovers had no thing whatever to do.

The truth was, that the awful solitude of the place oppressed her; and the gloom, the silence in which these great monarchs of the world had stood for ages together. The snow, too, whose gray reservoirs, without a sound, had flooded the sky, blotting it out, was not the old, familiar snow of which she had been used to make balls or giants, long ago, in the days of Joe and the old Conestoga. This was the very realm of silence and of sorrow. Now Ross, in the grain, was a practical little body; she had to find for the vague trouble in her mind a reasonable cause. So it came to pass while she was eating her supper that she was picturing the miserable Christmas that her grandfather would spend, wishing she had found a larger turkey to go in the box which she sent him from Louisville. She had a plan for next Christmas—if the war was over—and it was the thought of that next Christmas, which brought the tears up, and made her go to the window lest she should be suspected of crying.

Garrick followed her. They stood side by side; he looked down at the tender curve of her mouth, the truth telling eyes. Why should he leave her to be the wife of another man? What if he were awkward, and almost a stranger to her? She came so near—so near. Her look, her little shy ways, her voice, were all akin to him—belonged to his own soul, his own long solitude and silence, as if they two stood alone in a foreign world, far from their native country.

Love? At the first bold entrance of the thought, a great quiet came to him, a delicious repose; it was as if the checked current, seething against its barrier, angry and turbid, had broken through at last, and spread gently over a land which would be forever green and sunny.

If she never loved him, if they parted there never to meet, it would not undo this which was done. He loved her. Now, in true love, there is always a great content and completeness, though it starve and die unreturned, knowing that, in some world beyond this, the recompense is sure.

When Garrick heard Rosslyn speak, he listened as if to inarticulate music. It surprised him, when he came out of the depth of his own emotion, to find that she was talking of nothing but the grass outside. She knew nothing of him or his love she might never care to know.

"The seed-grass looks like pearl sprays with this hoar frost on it," she said; "and see this brier," throwing up the window to break a twig of it. When she turned to show him how the thorns were sheathed in ice, her moist eyes were yet heavy, her cheeks

flushed -the hoar-frost had showered from the shaken bush in glittering sparks over her golden maze of hair.

He took the bough mechanically, and gave it back, his eyes fixed on her face.

"Miss Burley" (his voice surprised himself, it was so quiet and grave), "once, when I first knew you, I said that, if ever I spoke with you alone, I would tell you that I knew what you had done for me, and that I did not forget it."

Ross drew down her brows, perplexed. "O, you mean the drive from the ford?"

He colored. "It saved my life."

"I would have done as much for any one. I incurred no risk. Besides, it is Pitt who deserves your thanks, if any are due."

She stood, playing with her frosted twig, an invisible wall of ice about her; no passion or force of his, he thought, could break it down.

And indeed, beyond looks, the meaning of which Rosslyn was too slow-witted to interpret, the professor had treated the young girl, so far, with the just, mild consideration which he used to his pupils; he was a painstaking, somewhat patronizing protector, but no more.

What her secret idea of him was by this time, only she knew, or ever will know; whether she still thought of him as Greatheart, and herself as Mercy, or whether she shrewdly suspected him of being a prig and a pedant.

Finding that she continued silent, having forgotten, apparently, all that he had said, Garrick forced an unsteady laugh, though there was no laugh in the grave, anxious eyes looking over her head at the whitened window panes.

"In the old romances," he said, "the adventure always begins by the rescue of the maiden's life by the knight. A life saved serves a good purpose in the opening of a story."

"What good purpose?" she said, carelessly. "To the story, I mean?"

Randolph paused. "It breaks down the barriers of ceremony, the insincere rules of society—sweeps them away as prolix rubbish. It gives to the story the chance of a fairer ending." His voice sank meaningly. "They stand together no longer knight and maiden, but face to face as man and woman."

She turned, startled at the change in his tone, and as she listened an astonished pain gathered in her face.

"The bond between them removes them into a world of truth and reality—"

She moved—he put out his hand to detain her, raising his voice hurriedly—"Into a world where there is something deeper than the courtesy and badinage which you and I have known hate and love."

Ross stood silent a moment. There were times when she had the power of great reticence; her simple, serious manner, which openly said, "Thus far I go, but no further," was to a man like Randolph an impregnable barrier.

"We have been taught in different schools," she said, smiling. "Now, to me the forms of society are altogether useful, and not insincere. They would be a pleasanter bond than any uneasy sense of gratitude—to me."

"You wish me to forget what I owe to you, then?" abruptly.

"You owe me so little!" with a slight gesture of her fingers, as if she threw something away. "But if it were more -Friend Blanchard would tell you that there was no yoke so light or so galling as that of gratitude. And as for me, I should not wish to be compelled to choose as my friend for life the man who chanced to drag me out of the under-tow or the burning house. He might not be at all a comfortable companion with whom to walk in your world of realities."

He was in no humor for jest. For the first time, she found his indolent face stern and immovable. She tried to pass him, but he did not perceive her.

"See!" moving her hand as though she lifted something from his shoulders. "I take off all weight of gratitude to me. You shall not impose any yoke upon yourself if I can help it. I must go to bid Friend Blanchard good-night, now."

"One moment, Miss Burley—"

Ross drew back; when she saw how earnest he was, she stood quite still, her breath coming quicker, and her face a little pale. Garrick read it with a keen impatience. It angered him that she did not comprehend his feeling and respond to it, though, in truth, the suddenness of its heat and passion startled himself. Since he was a child, every shade of opinion or emotion which he chose to express had been watched and discussed with eager interest by his father or Aunt Laura. Now, at this great crisis of his life, when his very soul, he thought, was going out into an untried existence, he was left alone, and the woman for whom he risked all stood by, blind and indifferent. It was therefore more the petted old bachelor, grown stiff in his own habits and whims, that spoke to Rosslyn again, than the boy beneath, who, for the first time in his life, was learning to love.

"It is impossible that you do not understand me," he said, petulantly. "I have no wish to force my gratitude on you. The service probably was nothing to you, but it imported much to me and to those who care for me. But I have no wish to force my gratitude —no. It was another desire. I express myself ill—I have known so few women—having lived so much alone," he hesitated, and then caught her frank, brown eyes resting curiously on his.

"I do *not* understand," gently. "I am both dull and blunt, my grandfather says. You must use blunt words to me. Can I serve you again, Mr. Randolph?"

Garrick laughed; a cordial, eager laugh; something in the straightforward, earnest eyes had called his manhood up alert and strong; there was no hesitation now—

"You can serve me, surely. You talked a moment ago of choosing a friend—choose me. Let us find some quiet path in that world of realities, and go walking in it together, testing the world and testing each other. What do you say?" holding out his hand, forgetting to smile in his grave eagerness.

She did not speak, though her lips moved once or twice. She watched him searchingly, doubting her own idea of his meaning.

"I know so little," he said, "of any world where men and women dare to show themselves to each other as God made them. I have lived among books, among acids and salts. I have had no friendships nor loves among women, as other young men. I have looked at them through a kind of religious glamour as men did in the old chivalric days. Suffer me to be your friend. Suffer me to come near you."

Ross was looking wistfully out of the window. She gave a queer, absent little nod. "My friend? *My* friend? I know how that would end—I know."

Randolph bent forward, his eager, breathless lips apart. "I only ask to be your friend—now," in a gentle, explanatory voice, as if he talked to a child. "I do not wish to urge you, or to be coarse, or rough. Perhaps I should not have said even this until you were under the shelter of your own home—I know how much it is for me to ask. But you have seemed so near, so different from all other women," looking away from her; talking to himself of her. "And I am not made of stone."

He said no more, watching the erect little figure, the sweet yet strong face turned full toward the only light in the room. There were no shy blushes nor smiles on it: on the contrary, he fancied it had a worn, shrunken look in the last few moments which he had never seen before; yet, never had it seemed to him so womanly or so helpless.

Now, in that moment there was a curious remembrance strong in her mind.

Ross Burley lived in the hearts of a great many men and women; her life was too healthy and sunny and full of affection not to have drawn toward it many weaker, hungrier natures. She gave to them as a hill spring gives water, lavishly, without money and without price. But from love such as she read in this man's face, when it had come to her before, she had turned away, pained and dumb. She never talked of it, or of marriage, to the young girls who were

her companions; their chatter seemed coarse and worldly. But one night long ago, sitting by her grandfather on the floor, she had spoken to him of it; gravely, as she might of her dead mother or of Christ; it was that night which she thought of now.

"I do not know what love is," she had said. "But neither do these men. No; they do not know!" shaking her head as she looked in the fire.

Old Joe smoked his pipe out slowly before he answered her, then he spoke in an uncertain way, thrusting his finger in the bowl.

"Some day you'll know, Rossline. I'll be glad when I've heerd that day has come, although— I'll be glad for you see a woman's veins is jest half dried up without husband and child of her own." He stopped a moment, and then lifting her face by the chin, looked her steadily in the eyes as he said, "Rossline, ef that day ever should come, remember that them as love is born agin. You've ben different from others; there's bin hurts you've had. Ye're to leave all behind—*all*. Ye're to take no smut nor stain to him as calls you. Cleavin' unto him, says the Good Man, an' forsakin' father an' mother an' house. Rossline, that'll mean yer grandad along with the rest." She had laughed at the time.

But he had not laughed; had grimly knocked the ashes out of his pipe, and after a while had drawn her on to his knee, saying, "Ye're mine yet, Sweetheart. But ye're to put me away with the rest. Mind them words of mine. Maybe some day they'll make yer way clear."

Why did all this come to Ross Burley, now? This man had only offered her friendship, yet no lover that had sued to her had so challenged the very secrets of her soul. She struggled against exposure, she would not have her inmost fancies dragged to the light thus. But before all other thoughts, were her grandfather's words on that night. She understood them at last. Was the time ever to come when she must choose between him and any other?

She roused herself with a sort of shiver when Randolph's face came between her and the light.

"You will suffer me to be your friend? What if we learned to know each other in all sincerity, face to face. It would but—"

She threw up her hand hastily. He stopped.

"It is a very ordinary thing that you ask, I know. Most women form such compacts. But I am a stranger to you. What do you know of me?"

All that there was to know, came freshly to her with the words; the misery, the shame that began before she was born; the years of abject poverty; the years of struggle, every one of which, however praiseworthy in itself, would be an iron bar between her and this man.

"It is too early to ask for friendship," she said, turning away; "there is too much to learn of me."

"For leave to learn it, then?" with a quick step forward. "See; my life is open to you, every day of it—and my thoughts; they are both weak and trivial enough, God knows. But I think that something has entered into them which will make them noble and true—if it will stay."

Ross blushed and laughed nervously. After all, she was childish in some things, and his honest, awkward gestures, his earnest, boyish eyes touched her home. And then it was so difficult for her to feel always guilty for James Strebling's crime. He only asked to be her friend, what right had she to deny him? But he should be warned.

"I cannot forbid you to stand nearer, or to criticise me," she said. "But it is better that men and women should look at each other always through your religious glamour, I think. When they come face to face, they see ——"

"They see—what?"

"Stains, which no water will wash away."

"I do not understand you," after a moment's startled pause.

But the bitter emphasis was gone already from her good tempered, happy face. "No matter. Let me go now. Give me time. But if you will read one line, you shall read all. I will keep nothing back."

He did not seem to hear her, but stood listening with an indulgent smile, as to a child's talk. Once he stooped, and took the branch of brier from her, with a hungry impulse to hold something which she had touched. When he breathed carelessly on it, the silvery crust of frost disappeared from the stem and seed vessels, and trickled down, soiling his hand. He threw it away.

Ross nodded to it meaningly. "You brought it too close. There is nothing of it now but a broken bough, and a blot of muddy water. You are warned."

He laughed triumphantly. "I am not afraid."

But Ross looked down at it again, as if it bore for her some peculiar meaning.

"I do not like ill omens," she said, gravely, at which Garrick smiled again complacently. Her little whims and ignorances were very charming in his eyes.

When she went away, he accompanied her, holding the door open with his usual stately politeness, bowing low.

"Good night, my friend."

"Good night."

He did not offer his hand again. She was glad of that. How he had thrown down the bit of brier under foot, when it only smirched his fingers! He should know whose hand hers was before he touched it again. She walked heavily up the stairs, thinking how once the man whose child she was, had drawn on his dainty gloves because her fingers smelled of fish-brine.

When she came to her own room, she stopped, leaning her head and arms on the bureau, looking into the square bit of glass. Was it her fault that she had been born poor, and with these damned spots on her which nothing would take away? She looked at the clear-cut, delicate face, at the reasonable soul in her eyes. After she had made herself this, was she to give up all the chance of life? Were these men, father and lover, to thrust her aside for that which was no crime of hers?

Yet as she looked, a comfort began to come to her from her own features. "Nature stamped me a Burley," she said. "I thank God for that." She began to make ready to pay her nightly visit to Friend Blanchard, and as she moved about, her grandfather's old words came to her persistently, how that the day would some time come when she would choose to leave him behind. Him, and the old life of which he was a part.

"That day will never come," said Ross Burley. "Never."

CHAPTER XI.

THE RECORD OF A LIFE.

Friend Blanchard sat reading by a lamp in her little chamber. The one square window was uncurtained, and outside, a single white mountain peak glowered down on her through the night, like a solitary spectre, keeping watch. At another time the solitude, and the terrors of the night and mountain would have been subjects to appreciate and enjoy, as she would the tragic music of the march of men going to battle, but now she had something else to think of. She had heard the faint murmur of voices below, then Rosslyn's foot upon the stairs. When she passed into her own chamber, the old lady laid down her book, her eyes kindling under their black brows as she watched the door impatiently.

When the tap for which she waited came, however, and Ross entered, she began to read placidly, after a keen glance at her.

"There is thy chair, my child."

In the long silence that followed, the older woman looked at the young one once or twice, furtively, as she turned a page.

"I think it has come," she thought, with a jealous, fierce contraction of her mouth and nostrils. Her love for the girl was something between a mother's sense of possession, and the gallant admiration of a man. She scanned again and again the figure by the fire, with the soft, white folds of the woolen wrapper falling about it, the wavy, golden hair knotted back, the blue-veined, bare feet thrust into slippers. "Randolph has spoken to her. There is a look in her face that was never there before. Rosslyn is gone out of my world," with a sarcastic smile.

But her eyes ached. She put her book down, and unpinned her cap strings. She had not known how much of her daily bread this girl had furnished in the last eleven years. And old age is hungry. When the cap was laid aside, she stood up suddenly, and, going over to her, stooped and kissed her on the forehead. Ross smiled, but the color came to the faces of both women.

"You never kissed me before."

"No. Women disgust me with their indiscriminate fondlings. Thy person was thine own. But thee has been as dear to me, Ross, as the child of my own body."

"I was not that. I owe you more than birth, I think. You made me, after the fashion in which Caspar Hauser was made by those who found him."

"Rosslyn?"

She put her hand on Ross' forehead, pushing back her head and looking into the pale face with its spot of scarlet heat on either cheek, and the steady, piercing eyes.

"Rosslyn, thee is not wont to nurse morbid fancies."

"It is not morbid," gravely, moving gently away. "But I am apt to forget what I was, or, remembering, to be ashamed of it. I understand why the nuns found it necessary to use the lash on their own bare flesh sometimes. Friend Abigail—" She stopped abruptly.

"What is it, Ross?"

"Nothing," after a short pause; "only the name which your people chose to be called by. It never struck me before. Friend? *Friend?* That means so much," looking up, her eyes growing uncertain, and dim.

"Yes. It means more than any other word," watching her shrewdly as she sat opposite to her on a low settee. "When God gives a friend to a woman in her husband, or lover, or child, He has little more to give her—here."

"I can understand that," said Ross, slowly. She had a thick, gray-bound book in her lap, something like a day-book. Her hands were clasped over it. Friend Blanchard took off her watch. As she wound it, she looked askance at the mouth, sternly shut, and averted eyes.

"Can I help thee, Ross? Thee has some trouble to-night."

"No," with a forced smile. "I was only thinking of the gifts, which you say God has for women. But one woman cannot have all; one must give something up."

"No," laying down the watch. "One cannot have all. But God gives us a choice."

"A choice? Yes, there is a choice." She was silent a while, then lifted the book and began to unclasp it.

"What is it that thee has there?"

"Some old drawings of mine that you have never seen," chang-

ing her seat so that she could hold the book open before them both. "I wanted to look at them, and show them to you to-night."

"Yes." She asked no questions, carefully avoided Ross' face; following her gravely, as she turned over the leaves to the first page.

"You know what this is?"

"I think so. Yes. A stall in the Pine Street market. But it was not so wretched a place as thee has painted it."

"Wretched?" said Ross, thoughtfully. "Did I make it that? I did not intend that. I go down there often, and they give me such a hearty welcome! Those people were very kind to me—they're kinder to each other than any other class. See, here is where the old Conestoga used to wait for me every evening. I never hear such bells as ours, now. This is Scheffer's boy to the right. He is a butcher out in Spring Garden. He calls his eldest girl for me, Rosslyn Comly. He works hard to keep his old father and mother in a certain idle state—that is his sole pride. He is a God fearing and helpful man, with a vein of tenderness under all, though he has spent his life in killing beeves. His dirty face used to symbolize all misery and vice to me. It would do so to Garrick Randolph now."

"Yes," said the Quakeress dryly. "It always will."

Ross had spoken in a low, constrained voice, as if she repeated a lesson. She turned the leaf.

Friend Blanchard smiled. "Thee has made the old Quakeress, in her sober carriage, look like Cleopatra under her purple sails."

Ross did not laugh. "No colors would paint you as you seemed to me that day. It was a Summer day do you remember? Fifteen years ago, now -I was eating my bread and cheese here by these fish barrels, when you drove slowly by in the pleasant evening light. Oh, the loathing that came to me at that moment of myself and my place! I followed you then—"

Friend Blanchard put out her hand and closed the book.

"Enough of this," authoritatively. "What does it mean? What purpose will it serve?"

Ross stood up, her mouth more set and stern.

"It means that it is good for me to go back and see myself as I was then. It means that I was in danger to-night of forgetting the child that left her stall, and followed you through the crowded streets to your home, full of a hungry discontent, asking you what she should do to grow like you. It is better for me to remember, beyond that, what might have been my fate, if you had turned me away " She raised her head irresolutely, and let it fall, her skin growing gray and dry. "What I might have been -"

"Stay, Rosslyn!"

"I do not know. I was so filled with shame. That old stain on me was so heavy to bear. It is heavy sometimes now—"

Friend Blanchard put her trembling hands together to steady them. "Thee forgets Who sent thee to me, Rosslyn. Who had thee in care."

Ross grew pale slowly. "I do not forget. He was like us. *He* was one of us," under her breath.

"Why should thee think of those days with bitterness then?"

"I am not bitter," said poor Ross. "Only sometimes— Well," with a sigh, "God knows what I would be if I did not go back sometimes to the place and people where I belong. I might begin to talk of Bourbon blood," with a faint smile. "So I made these pictures, and have kept them. They are studies from nature which no book can furnish me. Do you remember this?" holding the leaf open at the picture of a girl of ten or twelve years old, tawdrily dressed, with rouge on her cheeks and mock pearls strung through her hair.

Friend Blanchard colored. "It is a caricature."

"No," said Ross, her eyes beginning to lighten into their old pathetic humor as she looked at it. "That was Rosslyn Burley left to herself. It was the end of your experiment of the first year. My grandfather took me from the market, and sent me to the public school. At the end of the year I was to come to you—and it was in this fashion that I went." She held the picture closer, her mouth twitching with a smile, but her eyes were wet when she looked up.

"That miserable dress was the result of so many struggles and ambitions for that poor little girl!" she said. "It was the best she knew, and she did it. Beyond what you see here, whatever I am, came from you."

"No. Thee did not owe it to me that God gave thee the artist's eye and hand, the talent which brought all else with it. I wish thee to be clear on one point, Rosslyn," gravely. "Thee owes me nothing beyond advice and sympathy. I took care of that. I meant thee should be free from any obligation which it might annoy thy husband to remember. I have often wished for an opportunity to tell thee this. Thy education was paid for at first by thy grandfather, and afterward by the sale of thy designs. Thee is indebted to no one for the help of money."

"I am glad of that," heartily.

She turned over the leaves of the book rapidly. It was a thick volume, and well filled; on every page one or two studies.

"I never kept a diary, I am so dull a writer; but I think any one could read my life here. It seems plain to me. Here are the days before I knew you, and bits from the School of Design; there are receipts from the engravers who employ me, and faces of people whom I know—"

She paused there. There were many of these last, as many vile

as pure—the vacant and ignorant, with the noble, and the commonplace, ennobled by resolute purpose. Something which she read in all of them brought the healthy tone back suddenly into Ross' voice. "These faces here are—people who love me, I think," she said gently, closing the book.

The old lady, seeing how the angry lines had softened out of her face, and hearing her voice cheerful and full again, leaned back in her chair, and fell easily into the prosy current of moralizing with which she usually closed the day. "After all," she said, "life is but a long battle with circumstances for all of us. Thee has thine enemy there in visible form, Rosslyn."

"Yes, it is all here," she said, quietly. "One might guess at even the birth of James Strebling's daughter, from the pages of this book."

There was a long silence. Suddenly Abigail raised herself in her chair with energy, holding out her hand. "Rosslyn," she said, "give me that book. It is unjust, unjust, that the sins of the father should fall on the children. Some day thee will wish to marry, and thee has no right to carry disgrace to thy husband."

"No, I have no right."

"Destroy the book, and conceal thy birth. The rest will not matter."

Ross shut the clasps of the book securely. She tried to speak, but did not.

Abigail still held her hand outstretched. "I am an older woman than thee. I know the value of what thee is giving up. I know what a woman needs."

Ross' chin began to quiver, and her fingers to move unsteadily over the cover; but she held it firm. "There is a great deal of comfort to me in these old days," she said. "I will tell no lie about my life. I will lose nothing—but a friend who will not like its story, perhaps. And one cannot keep all. One must let something go."

And that night, when her door was locked upon her again, there came to her the words of her grandfather, already made so plain, and then she knew that, whatever friend or true lover she gave up, it would not be the old man on whose knee she had sat, on whose breast her head had lain, and in whose heart she was so securely held.

CHAPTER XII.

THE GLAMOUR OF AN OPEN FIRE.

GARRICK RANDOLPH grew tired of pacing up and down the quiet parlors of his hotel, so went up to the Academy of Sciences, and paced solemnly up and down there, between the cases of minerals and mummies.

He was sulky, but he thought he was misanthropic. It was a week since he had come to Philadelphia: the streets, every day, echoed to the monotonous tramp of regiments passing down to the Army of the Potomac, but there was no commission ready for him. Friend Blanchard doubted if all her plotting or forcing would slip him into even an inferior place.

The drowse and enchantment of the journey were over. The war, terrible and bloody, was present in every sight or sound. The face of a great city compacts and reflects like a convex mirror the feeling of a country, and even Garrick's slow eyes read with amazement in it, the strength and resolve of the North and the slow agony of this grapple, which was to end in a better life or in death.

But as for himself—if he went into the streets to jostle with the throng, he was of no more note than any other looker on; than

these jaunty school-girls, or hook nosed, red-cravatted Jew shop-boys lounging through their Sabbath afternoon. He spoke to nobody from morning until night; drank his wine alone; began to be grateful for the bow of the dining-room steward which recognized him as a boarder: it gave him a place in the human family. Looking out now over the vast flat of houses, swarming with human beings of whom he knew but one solitary old woman, he began to feel as if he belonged as little to this world about him, as did the little dried-up skeletons of birds and fishes, staring at him with fleshless eyes, and as if he had come out of as narrow and remote a groove of life as their's had been.

In a word, Randolph had come to take part in the war, feeling like Hercules putting his shoulder to the cart-wheel, and he found himself to be but the fly on the rim. Blessed is the man who learns that most wholesome and galling of lessons in his youth! Better a leg or an arm lost in the battle of middle-life, than self-complacency wrenched away late from us!

It was no comfort to him to think of Rosslyn. Their Christmas in the mountains had suddenly lost its zest, although the programme had been unaltered: impromptu gifts, the carols and the dinner had all been gone through, but Miss Burley played her part like an automaton. The lamp was there, but the light in it had gone out, and Mr. Randolph had an uneasy sense all day that he had been to blame for it.

Rosslyn spent half of the afternoon in the kitchen, talking to the old grandmother about a wagoner named Joe, who had stopped at the tavern which the Baldwins had kept long ago. He heard them as he passed the door. He told Friend Blanchard that he perceived Miss Burley was a radical. "Had she any aesthetic appetite for studies of vulgarity of habit and diction, or was she acting as a home missionary?"

The old lady had flushed a little at his tone, but told him gravely, No; that she herself "was not a radical; she would not choose red paint or blankets as her own ordinary attire, yet she had known a Winnebago squaw once who was a pleasant companion, and a loyal friend."

To which he assented, not knowing at all what she meant.

After their arrival he saw them but once. Friend Blanchard had gone some months before to live with Miss Burley in a small farm-house beyond Camden: a quaint, quiet little place; "a home as well as homely," the Quakeress said. When he heard that the house belonged to Rosslyn, and had been her home since childhood, Garrick was fired with a keen impatience to see it. No spot of ground had ever seemed holy to him before: but there, he would find the impress of her pure, generous life; hint after hint of the years before he knew her. He was jealous of those years; he

wanted them all, brought open to him: he wanted her past and her future laid absolutely in his hand.

He was asked to dine with them, formally, once, and had gone. That was all. There were other people there; he did not remember whether men or women. There were some things which he did remember.

When he chose this woman as his friend, he supposed that it was an unknown treasure which he had discovered. He meant to shut out the world, to go apart to enjoy it, to test and prove it, whether it were best to sell all that he had to buy it or not. He did not expect to find that all the world had been beforehand with him, had assayed and tried and paid more homage to its worth than he!

These people about her, to the very servant that stood behind her chair, had property in her, he saw: there were a thousand ties between them of which he knew nothing; there were little kindnesses remembered; help given or received on one side or the other; some cheerful, friendly memory in every eye that looked on her—keeping a pleasant light about her, perpetually.

Ross glowed with hospitality, too, in every drop of her blood, which is a virtue different from any other. The old home was hers and her grandfather's; the bit of the earth, she thought secretly, which her Lord had given them, to stand upright on; she liked to welcome people to it, rich or poor—Abigail Blanchard's friends, from their country seats, or her own, from the alleys where she had lived in the city; she liked them to find their beds in her house warm and soft, their meals delicious, no matter how little they cost; she was anxious and eager to give them all one heartsome, strengthening hour to remember, if it was but one they could spend under her roof; there was not a day in which she did not find some new thing to make her home fresher or more attractive.

"I think I'm right," she said, obstinately, when Friend Blanchard, knowing how small her earnings were, reasoned with her. "I am no genius; I am not peculiarly gentle or good tempered. Let me have my little house, and do what good I can in it. When God opened the world for us, He took us all in, and He made our house beautiful, as well as useful."

The old lady stood back after that, watching with shrewd amusement, year after year, how the scanty earnings were made to fertilize a larger and larger field.

Ross gathered a queer set of people about her; one or two runaway slaves unfit for work; a lame, little field-boy, a crabbed old cook; every inch of the little farm was taxed to make a plentiful and pleasant home for them.

Mr. Randolph found the glimpse which he caught of this state of affairs distasteful enough. Miss Burley's life was generous, wholesome and beautiful, as he had imagined, but he saw no vacant

place in it for himself. After the first visit, he had not even been able to see her, use what effort he might.

Left to himself, thus, the old story which Friend Blanchard had told him began to haunt him. The war, while his judgment was enlisted on one side, and his feelings on the other, was a dreary muddle to him; he put it away, and went back to his own affairs. One inch of the oat-fields or mullen-grown clay roads about the old house at home, was more to him than this flat brick and marble mass, with its million of swarming lives. He took up the old story, turned it over and over, day by day. Why had it been kept from him? His father, Aunt Laura, the old negro Hugh—why had no hint of it been dropped by any of them? Could any suspicion ever have rested on his father for cognizance of the negro's supposed concealment of the will? Garrick's blood checked at the heart, and then tingled, like fire, through his veins. At night, on the streets, and now here in this wilderness of stuffed beasts and human skulls, he was busy with this one idea: the most distinct and practical thought it suggested being a wish to see the negro, and atone to him for his long neglect.

Coming down the crooked stairs, on to the pavement, just as the setting sun threw a glare of yellow light across the streets, Garrick heard his name called, and looking up, saw a sleigh drawn up to the gutter, in which two ladies were seated.

"Miss Conrad!" He gave her his hand eagerly, although he had not been used to like her; but it was a Kentucky face!

She shook it, warmly. "I am sure I never expected to see you alive out of the hands of either blues or grays. Not that you were wanting in courage, but you had no more experience than a baby, you know," said honest, tactless Margaret, opening out the tiger skins to find a seat for him. "Come out with us to see my father, Garrick. It will be good for him."

Randolph sprang into the vacant place. "It will be good for me," heartily.

He waited for her to ask some questions about his hair-breadth escapes, but Miss Conrad never had any more curiosity than if she were made of lead. She leaned back, nodding to the driver to go on.

"Mrs. Ottley, this is my cousin of whom my father has, no doubt, told you that he was a Randolph, going back to the Champernouns of Elizabeth's time."

Garrick's suspicious glance could catch no satire in the wide, gray eye sweeping the broad street, leisurely. It was leaden as her wits, he thought, and surrendered himself to be entertained by the blue-eyed, dapper, chattering little woman opposite to him.

Mrs. Ottley met the Randolph with his roots in the Champernouns, as one scion of a royal stock might greet another. She her-

self was a Sterratt, of York, Pa., whose great grandfather, a blacksmith, had laid out that town. The ground-rents brought her in now three hundred a year. "It was not the amount," she used to say, "but -" Every dollar of it represented to her a sort of fee of an estate which her ancestor had enfeoffed. When she visited the Perkinses, the doctor's family in York, or at Cutler's, the grocer's, she felt like a feudal dame descending into the adjacent cottages. She and Randolph fraternized at once, and beguiled the way by bewailing the war, and the disruption of society consequent upon it. Garrick thought her a very well-bred and clever woman (for a Northerner), by the time they were at their journey's end.

The house was one of those large, low-ceiled houses of rough-hewn stone, squatted here and there through Berks and Philadelphia counties, like overgrown Dutch ovens. Garrick, who had a woman's eye for minutiæ, noticed as they passed through the wide hall that the rooms were poorly furnished, with the exception of flower-stands filled with the rarest exotics. Some tamed birds, too, that fluttered about the window-ledges; and a tawny Russian hound, worth his weight in gold, Garrick knew, to dog-fanciers, came sauntering from the warm inner room to meet him.

"They are trifles that amuse Mr. Conrad. He has a friend who brings them to him," explained Margaret. She stopped, stroking the dog's head with her ungloved hand in her slow, composed manner. But Randolph saw her dull, gray eyes gather a sudden liquid brilliance, and a change came on her face that startled him. "Her love for that blind old man is putting a soul into her," he thought, as he pulled off his overcoat, muttering to himself something from Ariosto, how that "the horse was perfect; that he had no fault to find with the horse, except that it was dead." Then he hurried into the inner room, with a vague idea of avoiding her; he had no data from which to guess what sort of life the woman would develop; whether it was a dainty spirit that lay hid in her veins, or a vicious one.

He stopped suddenly in the open door. By one of those inexplicable links of memory, something in the room brought back his childhood to him, one day in especial, when he was learning to swim in the Cumberland. It had come and gone like an electric flash before he could distinguish even its features; but there was his father, the negro Hugh, and the river, with a group of lookers on on the bank.

He walked hastily forward to meet the blind old man, who had started up with both hands out.

"God bless you, Garrick! Know you? I knew your voice in the hall. I said, 'that's Coyle Randolph's voice, or his son's.' So you've come up to join the good cause?"

"Yes; I've come up to join the good cause."

The old man turned his head, attentive. "You are not well? What is it?

"Yes, I'm well." Garrick laughed, with an annoyed, quick look about him. "But the room confused me. Something familiar in it brought old times up so plainly that I lost my self-possession for a moment."

"It's the open fire," broke in Conrad, triumphantly. "You've been sitting over grates in the wall; it's the fire had the home look to you. I told Meg I must hear the crackle and the ashes crumblin' down. I'm glad I did if it give you a welcome."

"It was the fire, no doubt," said Randolph, holding his numbed hands out over the blaze, but giving another perplexed look over the apartment. The Streblings, the lost will, all the old story was coming freshly before him after that flash of memory.

It was a wide, cheerful room, with brown paper on the walls, and brown carpet on the floor. But the westering sunlight came in through half a dozen windows, and the broad glow of the fire met it half way, so that the shadows were driven into forgotten corners. Mrs. Ottley, in a crisp, showy, purple carriage dress, was frisking about the flowers childishly. The preacher, short and stout, was drawn up squarely on the rug. Miss Conrad, still in her dark furs and darker velvet cloak, stood by a window looking out at the snowy field; her head had drooped a little, which gave to her large, slow-moving figure an unusual, womanly grace, he thought. A little, small-featured, grave Frenchman, dressed in a suit of gray tightly buttoned over his thin chest, who had been playing chess with her father when they came in, was talking to her, his hands clasped behind him. There was nothing familiar here.

"It must have been the fire," thought Randolph, and put the matter away from him, turning to talk to the old man, who was growing broader and stouter, and more eager with his pleasure at meeting one of his own kin.

"Yes, it's chess, Garrick," in answer to some question. "I larned the trick of playing blindfold years ago, and Doctor Broderip here, he's freshened it up to me, agin."

Garrick looked up curiously at the name of the famous surgeon, and met a pair of light hazel eyes scanning him.

"Is he your friend?" said Broderip, in an undertone, to Miss Conrad.

"Yes."

The surgeon instantly left her, and joined the other two men, in order that he might be presented to him. He had (when he chose to have it) a frank, boyish manner, which impressed Randolph like the rare good humor of a sensitive, irritable woman.

"You looked at me steadfastly," he said, as he shook hands with Randolph, "have we met before?"

"No; but I had decided you to be a foreigner—French, from your appearance, and was surprised to find that you were a person whom I knew by reputation as an American."

"A foreigner?" The critical eyes left Garrick's face, glancing down at himself: "I lived in France for several years at the age when the habits and the voice are forming. It may have had its effect. I never have remarked it. But it had its effect, doubtless."

"In France? You were a boy there—in France?" said Margaret, her usually grave voice uncertain and timid.

"You speak so seldom of yourself, Doctor," broke in the old man, "there's a flavor of mystery about you that's very appetizing to the women—eh, Mrs. Ottley? But I guessed that much. You've got the tastes and habits of people civilized in another line than ours; they don't fight for idees, but sit down and enjoy. I thought you'd been among them as a lad. 'Jest as the twig is bent,' you know."

Broderip answered neither Margaret nor her father directly, but addressed Randolph, smiling, with his hazel, confusing eyes full on his face. "It is our boyhood that is responsible for us, I think, Mr. Randolph? Or blood, to go further back? Now, I did not know," he added, with an amused laugh, as he turned to Mrs. Ottley, "that any one had clothed my commonplace life with mystery. What little practice I have known was in the hospitals of Paris. There are themes enough for romance there, God knows, but I was not one of them; a hard working, Yankee boy."

He stopped to button his glove: his hand was delicate and shapely as a woman's, Garrick noticed; he caught a glimpse of a diamond *solitaire* that glistened in the gathers of the fine shirt-sleeve, but almost out of sight; his outer dress was without jewelry, coarse and heavy.

"You have had one perquisite of being born a Yankee, at least," said Randolph, with a tinge of bitterness—"success."

"Yes," gravely. "I performed one or two brilliant but rash operations in New York soon after my return which gave me my reputation. But it is factitious; solely factitious. I have had twice the success of many surgeons, whose skill in a course of practice would be proved infinitely superior to mine."

"That's plain-speaking, strong enough flavored for even Meg!" said her father.

Miss Conrad's gray eyes kindled again; she was holding her wrist steady for a canary to perch on, and may have been amused with it. But Doctor Broderip made a hasty step toward her, near enough for the folds of her dress to touch his foot. He only looked at her, however, and said hastily to her father: "You will not forget your promise for to morrow evening? It nears my hospital hour now. I must leave the game unfinished," glancing at the clock in the corner.

Mrs. Ottley fluttered up, beaming; "It is not probable that any of us will forget. Your reunions are *un grand succes*, doctor; 'rash but brilliant,' let me assure you. You spice them as no woman would know how to do; that is it, the spice—the eccentricity! For instance, Abigail Blanchard is to be with you to-morrow night, she is the sole relic left us of the old *régime;* and her inseparable friend—is she coming, Doctor Broderip?—who belongs to no *régime!*" shrugging her flat chest, and lifting her eyebrows.

"Do you mean Miss Burley?" said Garrick, the blood mounting to his face.

The little lady looked at him keenly, and then gave a vapid laugh to hide her embarrassment. "Rosslyn Burley, yes. A light-hearted, sweet-breathed girl. So pleasant that you know her! Whom shall we meet beside her, Doctor Broderip?"

"Mr. Randolph; if he will put all ceremony aside for me as I would do for him," said the surgeon, holding out his hand to Garrick with a frank smile that always won its way. It did not fail now; yet the young Kentuckian, after a cordial answer and as cordial a good-by, stood at the window watching the surgeon mounting into his low sleigh, and sitting behind a pair of thoroughbred grays, stiff and erect, his thin face reddened by the wind, with a twinge of envy. Broderip was a man of his own age, yet he had already left his foot-print in the world, won himself a name and solid wealth, while he, when he came, after a long vigil of thought and study, to take up his work, found no place, but was thrown out as salt that had lost its savor.

No matter.

To-morrow, was it, that he would see her? To-morrow? He stood a long time, looking out, and when he turned, found that Mrs. Ottley was still discussing Doctor Broderip and his *petits soupers.* He had opened the doors to her and other women since Margaret and her father came, and her opinions had undergone a complete change. More than any other man, she said, she found him congenial and in need of womanly counsel in his affairs.

"But then, every body grows more human, the nearer you come to them," she said. To which Margaret and her father, whose guests were sacred in their absence, answered nothing.

The old preacher and Broderip had "fellowshipped," in Western phrase, since their first meeting. The surgeon's vivid, unequal talk had the zest of good wine to Mr. Conrad, who had a surfeit on Sundays of the pictudes of his brethren of the Conference, who came in baggy clothes and rusty wigs, and ideas rustier and coarser than both, to condole with him on that loss of which his daughter never had spoken to him.

Why Broderip should relish the old stock-breeder's interminable talk that had a pungent earthy flavor in it, like that of the buckeye

woods in Fall, was not so plain. But apparently, he did relish it—came out, after a hard night's work, so often that a chamber was set apart for him; servants began to look upon him as an *habitué* of the place; the old man would catch the first sound of his horses' hoofs, and go out to meet him, whistling and flourishing his hickory stick. They were together like two boys out from school. They worked, and grew anxious alike over first one, and then another plan for draining, or subsoiling. The man was one of those whom it is natural to indulge; and even old Lotty, the cook, caught an idea of his whims, and humored them as far as she was able.

"Mas'r Broderip," she said, "was as fond of lyin' near this fire, and eatin' cake an' sirups, as a chile of her own." She and Margaret took care that neither fire nor sweetmeats were lacking. Yet, with all this, Hugh Conrad used to rub his bald, low forehead doubtfully when the surgeon drove away. "Mrs. Ottley calls him a quiet, well-bred gentleman, Meg. But he's not quiet; he's not well-bred; though I've a curous affection for him. A curous affection."

At another time he said, "I wish I could have a look at that little fellow's face. I'd understand him better. With all his open, boyish ways, he reminds me of the water of the Mississippi: clear atop but thick mud underneath. Yet I never hankered after the society of any man as much, I'll say that." To which Miss Conrad answered at random. She did not show her usual rough acumen in judging of Broderip.

With regard to herself. Doctor Broderip watched her at first with what he called an amused curiosity: because he had met no such woman among the trained, delicate young girls in Philadelphian or New York society.

There was a chalybeate spring in a field through which he used to pass on his way to town from the farm-house. He was a fanciful man: fond of subtle analogies; this spring reminded him of Margaret. It was the very emblem of power, stifled and ineffective. It forced itself up only to ooze uselessly through the baked clay, and to turn the whole field into a muddy, sullen marsh.

Broderip used to stop his horse to look at it. "If it only had a free channel opened for it," he used to think, "it could flow warm and deep, and healthfuller than any other water, straight to the sea." A commonplace, harmless fancy enough, but something in it always goaded him into a moody ill-temper. The patients in his hospital paid the penalty; and they knew they would pay it as soon as they saw his thin, scowling face at the ward doors. Such moods were not rare.

To be just to Broderip, however, we may mention here that there was one room into which he never was known to come without a

cheerful smile and pleasant words; it was the ward from which he received no pay; there was a sort of honor in his queer, unequal brain that made it impossible for him to insult men who received his charity. Whatever his temper may have been elsewhere (and it was often simply brutal), before them he held it down, and kept it out of sight.

On this evening, after leaving the farm-house his horses and the boy who sat beside him very soon discovered that he was in an unsafe temper; though he sat silent, his eyes half shut, his thin, sallow face set against the wind. Maxon, the toll gate keeper, for whom Broderip had every day some bit of chaffing or joke that started the old fellow to chuckling for an hour, gave him his change without a word, after a look at his face; when the off horse shied at a post in the road, and broke his trace, he did not speak, but sat motionless while the boy tried to fasten it; usually he would have jumped out to do it himself, have sworn and cursed at the horse, handling him as tenderly as if he had been a woman, and then in again whistling or humming some of his perpetual opera airs; for he was vain of his weak, shrill voice, and sang constantly, while alone.

It may have been the weather that had taken the spirit out of his veins, as it had the electric vigor from the air; he was susceptible to such influences. It was that most melancholy of seasons when Spring begins to put forth futile, feeble fingers into Winter. The air was raw and wet, it penetrated with a thick, unwholesome damp to the very bones; the half-thawed snow lay in muddy patches in the roads, the tops of the low, wind-beaten hills ran over in melting yellow clay, while their rutted sides began to put on a sickly green.

But if the discomfort and barrenness of the day had touched Broderip, he showed it by not even a glance to one side or the other; sat immovable as they drove rapidly into the city through the crowded streets, answering with a quick nod or grave monosyllable when he was stopped once or twice by the anxious friends of patients.

He alighted at the door of the hospital; two of his pupils, who were waiting on the steps, coming forward to meet him.

He made no answer to their greeting, but passed hurriedly in.

"An' I wish ye joy of the devil ye're a followin', gentl'men," chuckled the boy Bill, as he covered the horses. "I'm shet of him fur an hour."

He did not visit the pauper ward that evening; in the others the two young physicians followed him from bed to bed, paying exaggerated deference to his few constrained instructions, falling back now and again to shake their heads significantly, keeping as uneasy a watch on his sallow, sober face as if the boy had spoken the literal truth, and it was the devil that had them in charge. They

grew more uneasy as the time came for the single operation of the evening, on young Withers, whose leg was to be amputated, and who had been on low diet now preparing for it for a month. Broderip's needless cruelty when in these moods, a hint of which had reached even Mrs. Ottley, was too often a painful reality to the young men.

"He's always dangerous when he's dumb," said one of them, George Farr, when they went aside for lint and bandages. "Like any beast of prey—"

Then he stopped with a blush, for the surgeon had been kind to him; had taken him without a fee, and once when George had been drawn into a bad set, had paid his gambling debts, and taken him out of the station-house one night, keeping it quiet "for his mother's sake." It had been the salvation of Farr: the hand stretched out just as he was slipping into the pit. He followed Broderip after that, like a spaniel; quoted him to whoever would listen to him; imitated his manner and his dress. But being a weak nerved, dyspeptic boy, he was in constant terror of these savage moods, and almost as much in awe of the gayety, like drunkenness, which often succeeded them; both were something which he could not understand.

"He's been keeping Sam Withers' family since the night of the accident, to my certain knowledge," he said to the other student, Hubbard, trying to blot out his last words. But his pale, blue eyes turned frightened away, when Broderip drew down the sheet from the crushed leg. The surgeon, he knew, usually thrust a man's life about with his knife and saw-edge as if it were of no more value than a gad-fly; but there was relish, an actual gusto, in his small, colorless face as he cut to-night into this man's flesh; even George Farr's partial eyes saw that. He hacked it cruelly, as if it were his enemy that lay before him, his lips tight shut, his light eyes in a blaze. Even Hubbard, who was a big bully of a fellow, pulled at his moustache, losing color, growing more subservient to Broderip every moment.

Farr could bear it no longer. He shivered, shaking back his red hair, for he was a miserable little coward, physically, but he looked up from where he stooped, holding the sponge filled with ether to Withers' mouth, straight into the surgeon's set face.

"Is your hand steady, Doctor Broderip?" in a meaning voice. "Sam's life is most run out, I think. He's had such a tough work to keep it, it's a pity we'd let it slip for him. He's been a cursedly hard-worked fellow—Withers."

For he knew how to manage his man.

The knife stopped an instant: Broderip's irascible eyes contracted sharply, as a man's that is waked from a half sleep.

"There's no danger of his dying, damn him," sharply.

After a while—"Hard-worked, eh?" under his breath. His fingers moved after that with a skill and precision that held Hubbard breathless, for he was an enthusiast in his profession.

When it was all over, and Withers, safely back in his bed, opened his eyes slowly, the surgeon's face was the first they met.

"It's all right, young man!" he said, cheerily.

"I'll never forget the face and tone with which that man welcomed me back to life!" Sam was used to say afterward, when he was telling the story over for the thousandth time.

"What a fellow you are, Farr!" said Hubbard, as they were walking down street that night away from the hospital. "You've always some crank in your brain about Broderip, as if he could have had any ill-will to Withers!"

George Farr was stroking his thin sandy jaws thoughtfully. "I did not think he had any ill-will to Withers," he said, dryly, as if the subject had ceased to interest him.

CHAPTER XIII.

A MAN'S RIGHT.

The day that followed was warm as May. A mellow south wind swept away the few ragged snow-clouds that remained, with scorn, as if they had been the skirts of defeated Winter. The watery blue sky began to thaw into Summer tints; heated into even saffron and scarlet about the setting sun, and when he was gone, softened into faint blushes of mist about the horizon, as if to receive the benediction which the clear pale moon, floating up the west, brought with her.

The windows of the long suite of drawing-rooms, in Doctor Broderip's house, which opened to the south, were open; the curtains waving softly to and fro in the warm evening air, the lights burning in the chandeliers dimly within. Outside there were plats of grass, with here and there a crocus opening too early its leaves like flakes of dulled, forgotten sunshine. The windows of the green-houses were pushed up, and the heavy breaths of the heliotropes and jessamines crept out and made the thin air sentient with perfume.

An old Scotch gardener, with a felt hat over his sandy, canny face, was leisurely peering about the garden slopes, breaking off a bud here and a branch there. One or two dogs were rolling over the grass; a chubby-faced, black-haired boy shouting to them from the low window.

He was one of Broderip's pets; for the surgeon had reached the age when a man's love of children instinctively is strongest, and he gratified it as he did all of his whims. There were two or three

other boys in the house, children of paupers who had died in the hospital. Mr. Ottley had remonstrated with him, perceiving how quickly his jealous, keen affection developed.

"I would not allow myself to adopt a child of vicious parents," he said. "You are storing bitter disappointment for your old age."

"Perhaps, perhaps," Broderip had said, drawing the boy's long hair through his fingers as he stood between his knees. "But Philip must have his chance. Eh, Phil!" putting his thin lips to the boy's red mouth. His face had a jaded, vacant look, new to it, Mr. Ottley had fancied.

"Why does not the man marry and have wife and children of his own?" he thought, angrily, for, like all men who knew the little surgeon in private, Ottley had grown attached to him.

This had occurred a day or two ago. This evening Mr. Ottley came in again, on his road home to dinner, after his daily drive. He stopped to look at the premature crocuses, to chat with the gardener, Stephenson, and to romp with Phil and the dogs; then he sat down in the dim, luxurious rooms, looking critically at the bronzes and marbles as they grew clearer in the dusky light, becoming more discontented with his own new house. "Broderip furnishes as an artist paints," he muttered. "A little dramatic in his effects, perhaps, but he gets at the gist of the matter as none of us do."

He half-dozed, while waiting the surgeon's leisure; he had seen him as he passed the left wing of the building in his office, standing writing at a desk, the long, gray coat almost touching his ankles, his sallow, unsmiling face half hidden by the lank locks of black hair that fell over it. He came in, presently, through one of the low windows, and after he had roused Ottley, stood in it, holding back the curtain to catch the evening air.

"You've had a hard day's work, Broderip," seeing his strained, anxious face. "I came on business, but it can wait. The other surgeons have left that case of which Farr told me, to you, he says. There is barely a chance?"

Broderip moved irritably; he tolerated no intrusion into his practice; it was his own domain, where only, perhaps, he breathed free, and reached his full stature. "There's a chance, nothing more," he said.

But Ottley was not to be thrust aside. Broderip in private was but a sickly, moody fellow whom he liked as he would a woman; but for the cool, skilful surgeon he had a sort of curious awe, as wielding a great power in a world which he had never entered.

"If you succeed, it will be a thorough triumph over those fellows!" rubbing his fat little hands together.

"What does that matter?" impatiently. The patient was a

practical, influential man; hundreds of human beings were bettered daily by his presence in the world. The surgeon thought of this, and thought how that his life hung on one movement of his own thin fingers.

"He's a good man," he said, with a shudder. "It will be a loss if he dies. Come in and dine with me, Mr. Ottley. We can talk of your business over the table."

Ottley hesitated. Broderip's cook was imported with as much care as his wines, and the lawyer was a *bon vivant* in a quiet way. But he shook his head.

"No. We are all to be here this evening, and you need rest. You are working too hard, Broderip, much too hard. It was a trifling matter I wanted to mention. I know you are down in Washington sometimes, and have the control of a good deal of patronage; friends at court, I suppose, eh?"

"You have a friend that wants a place?" smiling and drawing closer, for he was a generous man, and liked, too, to play the patron.

"Well, no, not a friend, precisely. It's a young fellow in whom Mary has taken an interest (after an hour's acquaintance by the way), and she persuaded me to call on him this morning. He's a young Kentuckian; came up here to enter the army; one of the Randolphs from Pulaski County."

"Randolph? Yes. I met the man yesterday," said Broderip, gravely, patting the dog that stood by his knee.

"Ah? A fine young fellow, I think? Gallant, scholarly. He belongs, too, to one of those sound old family stocks that have a hereditary pride in keeping their record clean. Well, he's waiting here with empty hands, and is anxious enough, I suspect."

Finding that Broderip remained silent, he continued, with a conscious awkwardness, "Randolph has been a hard student. I think there's a slight stiffness, an old fashioned mannerism about him; but he's a handsome dog! A pair of truthful, blue eyes that won my wife at once. By the way, she fancies that there is a woman in the case."

"It is probable," still stroking Don's silky ears.

"Well," said Ottley, leisurely flecking a bit of dust from his sleeve, "I am boy enough still to take an interest in a love affair, I'll confess. I'd be glad if I could assist in placing the young fellow, if it would help him to a home and wife of his own. They are the birthright of every man."

"Of every man?" looking up sharply.

"Yes," something in the doctor's face made him answer, gravely, "I think so; unless, like you, he voluntarily gives them up," with an embarrassed laugh. "But that is not the point."

"No. You wanted me to assist this Randolph?"

"Yes. But I lay no stress on the matter, Broderip, understand.

He is a mere chance acquaintance; but you have helped me with so many poor devils, that when I want to be benevolent, I turn to you as naturally as Aladdin did to his lantern."

There was no smile on Broderip's face. It was immovably calm and grave.

"He wants to enter the army? With what motive?"

"To uphold the Constitution, I suppose," replied Ottley, tartly. "Certainly not for the abolition of slavery. Men like that are not to be made the tools of New England radicals and agitators."

He changed his position, his face reddened, he pushed his coat open.

"Then you think," said Broderip, quietly, "that the war will not result necessarily in that? There will be no change in the condition of the slaves?"

"God forbid! Why, sir, emancipate them and where can you stop? We will be asked to jostle at the polls with negroes, bring them to our tables, marry them to our daughters! Besides," lifting his hand when Broderip would have spoken, "the two races differ—differ vitally. If you attempt to put them on the same plane, it will end in the destruction of the weaker. There is not an Irish hodman, or Dutch mechanic who does not know the negro is his inferior, and will not join to put him down if he tries to compete with him in free labor. It is the old story of the earthen and iron pitcher. But it is common sense and philosophy also. Don't you understand?"

"Yes, I understand." After a pause, he said persistently, as if he had failed to comprehend Ottley's full meaning, "You have a good deal of foresight as a politician, Ottley. Do you think that the time in this country will never come when the negro will have a chance to make the man of himself which God intended him to be?"

"God, sir, intended him to be a servant in the tents of his brethren."

Broderip smiled, and Ottley raised his voice. "The defects are inherent in his blood which will keep him down. He is indolent, treacherous and sensual."

Broderip did not raise his head. "A bad record certainly. But as neither he nor his ancestors have ever owned a family name, and as he changes home and wife with every change of master, the lack of that 'hereditary pride in keeping his record clean' of which you talked may have something to do with it."

Ottley turned a puzzled face on him: "I did not know you were a radical, doctor. Well, the sum of the whole matter is, that there is no chance for the black man here. Never will be. Give him his liberty, enact what laws you please, you never can eradicate the caste prejudice: the instinct that separates the races."

Broderip rose hastily: "Instinct? instinct? That is it," he walked

uncertainly across the room. "I recognize the truth in that. You have touched the root of the matter."

He was silent so long that Ottley moved impatiently.

"We are forgetting our friend Randolph," the surgeon said, leaning on the back of a chair: "the man who wants me to help him to his birthright of home and wife!"

Ottley came back with a touch to good humor: "Yes. Now, there are some men whom one would suppose nature never intended to need a birth-right;" glancing over the thin gray figure and sallow, bitter face before him, grave and austere as a Romish priest's; "but this young fellow, I think, will appreciate both to the full."

The twilight without was darkening. Broderip waited until a servant passing through the rooms, had closed the windows, and brightened the gas light; then he said, still standing and keeping his hand on the dog's head, "I think it a curious coincidence that you should have asked a favor of me for this young fellow, Ottley. I saw him last night, and I am full of superstitious fancies, as you know—I thought it safer that I should avoid him."

Ottley looked at him bewildered.

Broderip hesitated: passing his hand quickly over his face. When he spoke, it was slowly, choosing his words with difficulty. "There is a class of men with whom it is better I should not come in contact. They—did not help me or mine in life as they might have done." There was a curious, grim smile on his face, as if some subtle meaning lay in his moderated words. "In fact, I owe them so little, that it is hardly fitting that one of them should come to me for *largesse* or bounty."

"But this Randolph?"

"I have no personal ill-will to that boy; what could I have? Yet, yesterday, he seemed to me to be the very presentment and type of these men who were not my friends. He has all their traits, for good or for evil."

Now, Ottley had a vague notion that the surgeon was holding some unwonted emotion out of sight under the monotonous quiet of his words; and he had the same kind of respect and tenderness for the little man's whims, and unreasonable antipathies, that he would have had for those of a child, whose brain was unnaturally forced and diseased; he rose at once, buttoning his coat, preparing to go: "If you have any such fancy about the young man, doctor," he said, heartily, "I will not press the matter. I am only sorry I mentioned it. Put it out of your mind altogether. You owe nothing to him, or his kin, whoever they may be."

"No; that is true; I owe them nothing."

As he walked to the door, Ottley saw, when they came under the light, that his face was quite colorless, and his hand, when he touched it, was dry and cold.

He held it a moment kindly. "These people will not be here for an hour or two. Go and sleep, Broderip. You're overworked. You will run yourself down faster than you think."

"Yes," uncertainly. "But—about that Randolph, Ottley? Give me to-night to think of it. I could find him a place with ease, if I chose."

"I would not do it," said Ottley, as he stepped out on the steps, on which the moon was now gleaming brightly. "I wouldn't do it. You have enough to think of, with men's lives daily depending on your coolness and judgment, without taking this young man's fortune in hand. Especially as you have conceived this antipathy to him."

"I'll think of it. I'll let you know to-night," he said, abruptly.

As Ottley sprang into his buggy and drove off, he looked back once or twice at the steps where Broderip stood in the moonlight, with his hands clasped behind him, looking vacantly down the lonely street. His face and little, lean figure in its queer, old-fashioned clothes, made him look oddly like a boy who had been forced into a man's trouble with his dress.

"One would think he fed on opium, with his unreasonable likings and antipathies," said the lawyer, impatiently, glancing down a moment after, complacently, at his own pursy, comfortable little person.

Broderip stood motionless for a few moments, then, as if prompted by some sudden idea, he turned and went in, hastily ascending a flight of stairs, and passing through a long corridor to one of the rooms which had been set apart when he bought the house, for his mother's use. He tapped at the door.

"John?" said a quick, piping voice within.

"Yes, it is John." His manner, even his voice relaxed as he crossed the threshhold.

It was a large, cheerful room, with an open, blazing fire and soft, shaded lights, but there was an excess of color and luxury in its appointments which jarred on the eye. On one side of the fire a low lounge stood, the small, pale face of an old woman rising out of an untidy heap of red silk quilt and white pillows. Her gray hair was straggling down, the lace cap was askew, one white, wrinkled hand moved restlessly, disarranging the newspapers and pamphlets scattered about her.

"Wheel the table closer to the fire. Doctor Broderip will dine here," she said to a servant. "That is for my own comfort, John," turning to him. "The days drag, when one lies here, half dead," tapping on her left hand which lay motionless and covered, with her right. "They drag. Sit down there, opposite to me."

She raised her head as she spoke, sharply inspecting the little table, then put out her hand touching the delicate napery, the

heaped flowers and grapes which caught the light like crystals of sea green and purple, the glass thin as golden bubbles; she had the eager delight in her face of one to whom wealth and its comforts were a novelty. Broderip watched her with a diverted smile: they were necessities to him, but to her always would be luxuries. She caught his look, and her faded, blue eyes twinkled.

"I know. It's weak. But they smooth the way down; they smooth the way. And it's the contrast with old times! Now, you forget what we have been."

"Am I likely to forget? Do they give me time?" The quiet amusement faded out of his face, and he looked steadily down at her from where he stood on the hearth rug.

She took up a newspaper, fluttering the pages uneasily, and watching him furtively, but asking no questions.

"Words, words!" after reading a scrap here and there, in a piping tone. "The old constitution? The bird has grown too large for that shell, eh, John?"

"I am no politician. Why should I be? *I?*"

She put out her hand to touch his, and let it fall, irresolutely, her jolly, shrewd, little face filling with uncomplaining trouble, the dregs of some old, assured pain. "Poor boy! Is it there the hurt lies?"

John looked down at her, thinking he was a brute, to come whining to her. Then he pulled a low stool near the lounge, and sat down, unlacing his shoes, and thrusting his feet into a pair of slippers which she had in readiness.

"Ha, that's comfort! The old hurt galls a little, at times," he said, cheerfully. "But we must look for that, you know. No matter what work or study I begin, the remembrance comes that there is something here" (drawing one finger across his forehead), "which must one day come to light. Let me make my life what I will, it is a thing which the vilest ruffian in Moyamensing prison would not exchange for his own. I cannot help thinking of that. No." His face had dropped between his palms, and, with the hot fire reddening it, it looked still more like that of a weak, uncertain boy.

She held her one hand over her eyes, her lips moving, but she said nothing. Whatever his pain was, the mother soul in the palsied little body tasted it, bitter as it came to him. He looked up presently.

"Why! why!" hurriedly taking her fingers, and chafing them in both hands. "After all, it never may happen, or, or—it may be years at least before it comes. We will forget it now. Let us talk of something else."

"No. There was a chance I thought of— Give me a drink, John, there is water on the table. There was a thing I have wanted to tell you of," as he lifted her, holding the glass to her colorless lips.

"There is no chance," quickly, as he gently laid her down. "I have thought of it for twenty years. God knows if I have tried, day after day, to be like other men. No; I was forced, as this dog here, into a brute body. No matter what brain or soul is in it, it cannot be done away. It is better not to talk of it. But we have had hard measure; eh, Don, old fellow?" with a miserable, boyish smile, pulling the dog closer to him.

She put out her hand, covering his thin jaws, as though the sight of his face was more than she could bear.

"John!" she cried; "John!"

He bent over her. "Kneel down here, close—I'm weak-witted and silly," her eyes wandering. "My brain's half dead with the rest. To think what help he needs, and that he has nothing but me!" and the commonplace little face lost all trace of its absurdity with its great humility and pain. Broderip stroked back the rough, white hair gently.

"I think you have forgotten all that you have been to me," he said. "I know nothing of the God of the churches, but you I do know. *You* have been humane and just to me."

"That is blasphemy."

"No; it is fact. Who dealt hardly with me, if not His people? But you—" He smiled down at her, an unspeakable tenderness and sincerity in his look which should have made any mother content with her work.

Yet there was a great gulf between the ignorant, feather-brained woman, and the man to whom God had given ten talents wherewith to help the world, if not to work out his own salvation. She knew that, and spoke with hesitation. She never had advised him since he was a boy.

"I have something to say. But I have such poor words. Something like this, John. When I was young, I used to think if ever I had a son, I would want to see the true man in him grow out of all likeness or traces of his lower nature. Just as the soul in Don here will come out clean and whole from his brute body, some day."

"In Don? *Don?*" eagerly. "I understand!"

"In—all of us," growing paler. "We all have an ugly, loathsome shell to creep out of, vices and passions left by some accursed old grandfather in our blood. I used to think that, if I had a son, I would work for him, I would wear God's patience out, until I had helped him to his true manhood."

"Yes."

She looked down now, avoiding his eye; they both were silent. Whatever their secret was, it rose barely between them, and neither of them faced it. It was noticeable, too, that, with all the pity and awe in her face, she neither held his hand, nor touched his hair, nor

made use of any of those little mute signs of affection to which mothers are so prone.

"I thought," she continued, "that when I had done all I could for my boy, I would thank God if He gave him one gift, better than any."

The surgeon moved suddenly, his face growing pale.

"The one thing," raising her voice, "which would develop and educate him as no books or travel could do. It is the way by which God oftenest shows Himself to women, and to men who are like them."

Broderip did not speak for a moment; then he rose slowly, as if his limbs pained him, and resumed his old position in front of the fire. "What do you mean?" he said, in a tone of constrained quiet.

"I mean love, John. A strong, good, human love."

She looked steadily at her dead hand lying livid and motionless on the paper; whatever pain or loss that sight meant to her, had grown stale from custom. But she could not look at John's face. She did not look at him, even, when, finding that he made no answer, she went on, after clearing her throat, her double chin quivering a little:

"I would have given to my boy, if I could, a wife and children. Yes, I would; a man has a right to that, no matter what other privations he may have to bear."

She held her breath to listen, the fingers of her shaking left hand wandering over her face. For a moment there was silence, then she heard him take one step closer to her.

"You seldom speak at random. Do you mean me? *Me?*"

The hand grew suddenly still; her breath came hurriedly; her eyes wandered, frightened, to the ceiling, to the cheery fire, to the darkness outside of the window — everywhere but to his face.

"I said," doggedly, "that a man had a right to be loved, to have a home, and wife, and children of his own. A right."

"I heard that said once before to-night. It seems to be an accepted rule in a purely moral and humane code, such as this church system in the States, which is called Christianity. There are some human rights, from which I am excluded by the followers of that code, as it is practised, however."

"I know, John."

"Is this one of them? Do you mean me?"

She looked up, turning pale; she looked at the small, stooped figure between her and the fire; at the face which had a new and strangely credulous look; at the thin lips, half parted into a smile; at the melancholy hazel eyes following her every motion with a terrible hunger and loneliness.

"You know me—what my life has been. I think it has been

pure," under his breath. "You know all," with the same slight, hardly perceptible motion of his finger across his face. "Do you tell me that I have a right to ask a good, pure woman to be my wife? that I have a right to be the father of her children?"

She held her eyes steadily on his face, but made no reply.

"I will trust to you for the truth. Your mind always lies nearer to the true God than mine. He knows I want to do what's right." He walked slowly across the room.

"John," she said with an effort, and then stopped. "John, if a woman puts her hands in yours and says that she loves, I would say that He meant you for each other. I would say, to marry her." She began hesitatingly, but gained boldness as she went on.

He stopped in his walk, as it happened, under the gas-light, his eyes burning, as though a different face than the old vehement one on the pillow were before him.

"To marry her? When she is found, I am to show her all the faults of me—the miserable weaknesses. I'll do that. I have a beast's temper I am greedy of money—I affect fashionable society. God knows, these are contemptible vices enough. But if she loves me, in spite of all, will there be more to tell? May she come to me, seeing only that part of me in my soul or brain for which I am responsible, or must I go back and show her the hard injustice dealt to me before I was born?"

She looked again at the smile, glowing now over his face—at the half quenched hunger in his eyes. Was it necessary to tell a truth which would give him, as he said, the position of poor Don in life? He had been such a good, manly boy, such a loving, tender son! Was it necessary? It would not be a lie; it would only be silence. And if it were a lie, the woman would not in truth be wronged by it. The woman? There was one, actually present to his mind, she saw. It was no new idea which she had suggested. And with the touch, her brain filled with a sudden fever of curiosity, and tender, womanly fancies and surmises.

"I -I hardly can advise in such a case, John. It is the man that a woman accepts in a true marriage, I think, and not the faults or—or diseases of his ancestors. But it is not for me to judge what amount of candor would be just to her."

"No; that is for me to judge." He paused a little, and then—"If I ever bring a wife home to you, you will find her candor itself," he said, with sudden gayety, coloring like a girl. She looked shrewdly up, but checked the question on her lips, and took up her paper again, while Broderip rang for dinner.

"I am starving," he said, as he sat down, and began to pull about her heaped grapes, while waiting, humming the burden of some street song. Her face beamed red with pleasure as she watched

the sudden, light hearted look. She threw down the paper and busied herself about his dinner, tasting and scolding and clucking over it like a hen about her chicks. With half of her body dead, enough remained to be a terror to servants, with whom she alternately fought, and fraternized. Broderip ate, and listened with an amused light in his eyes.

"Cloyne tells me that the house is open for guests to-night, John?" when they were alone.

"Yes."

"That sharp-edged old rapier, Friend Blanchard, is coming, and Miss Burley, the carpenter's daughter? They were detained near the gate this morning, and Cloyne lifted me to the window. It is a wonderful face—that girl's. Ach-h!" the ugly visage with its frowsy gray hair rolling about on the pillow with an odd mixture of fun and discontent. "One could bear even old age to have once carried such beauty through the world." She watched him keenly through all her affected grimaces. But he listened indifferently, she saw, only saying that it "was an honest, unconscious face," and then growing silent, and thoughtful. He sat a long time, breaking the stems of the grapes on his plate, and sipping some sweet, sluggish cordial in preference to the fiery wines which stood at his elbow. He looked up at last, speaking sharply; as she had looked for him to do.

"If you had your hand on the throat of a man to whom you owed a long debt of revenge, what would you do?"

Her face twinkled significantly. "According to the spirit, I would forgive and bless him; carnally speaking, I always found a satisfaction in paying any sort of debt, John."

He pushed his chair back.

"This man and his kin have made me what I am. Chance has so placed him in my power that I could put the bitter draught to his lips now, and make him drink it, drop by drop. But it seems to me it would be a brave thing to do to let him go, and to keep silence so that neither he nor any one should ever suspect the danger he had been in. That would be what you would call noble, manly, eh?" anxiously.

"Yes; it would. Chivalric."

He laughed eagerly. "Chivalric? Well then, John Broderip lifts the rod. So! so!" He began walking about the room, looking out of the window, pulling a leaf from a bouquet, laughing again and again to himself. Coming up suddenly to her—

"Besides, if I am to have the rights of a man, I must act as a man?"

"Yes, John." But she spoke with difficulty, and watched with almost dismay the elastic step, the heat in his hollow cheeks, and content in his eye.

"John—"

"What is it?" gently.

"I would not be confident. Remember that you build upon the sand."

"So far as the woman is concerned, yes. But" –he stopped, his momentary childish thrill of delight over, the old, dignified gravity subduing him again; but he still stood erect, his melancholy eyes on fire.

"I am listening, John."

"I did not build upon the sand in this: that, whatever God has made of me, He did not hinder me from being a man. If they knew all, they would put me on a par with the brute yonder. But in spite of them, I could yet do for them a true chivalric deed, such as you called this."

"But"—doubtfully, "who will know it?"

"I will know it. If I am to have the place of a man, I will play a man's part."

He bade her good-night, soon after. As she looked after him: "He is but a boy in size, and has a weak boy's mind in some ways," she said. She thought anxiously, too, of the advice she had given him. It was her love that had forced it from her against her judgment; his life had been such a hard strain since his birth; he never had romped and played like other children; even at that age his eye had caught that sad, furtive glance, of one who waits momentarily for detection and insult.

"Why, he used to be afraid of even me. Such a manly, generous little fellow!" she thought, going back to the old time, to the lessons she had taught, and the suits she had made for him, as foolish women will. How could she tell him to night that he was never to have a man's portion, as he never had had a child's? "But he never will. Love and marriage are not for him. He should submit to God's will." She covered her face with the newspaper and lay quite still for a long time; and the servants, thinking she was asleep, gently lowered the gas, and left her. But she was only thinking over her last words: "Was it God's will? Was it?"

CHAPTER XIV.

THE MAN SEEKS HIS RIGHT.

"Mr. Randolph!"

Garrick had been wandering through the softly lighted rooms in search of his host: he saw the little, stiff, long-coated figure, now, coming to meet him from a group of ladies, and held out his hand. Broderip only bowed, not seeing it, apparently, but his welcome in words was so eager and cordial, that Randolph did not note the

omission. Unconsciously, he still adhered to his vague idea that the surgeon was a Frenchman, and consequently received his uneasy, uncertain manner, and half intelligible sentences as the misfortune of foreign birth.

"You are most welcome, Mr. Randolph," he repeated. "There is no man living whom I would rather see under my roof, or eating my salt with me. I have, too, a matter of importance to discuss with you."

"With me?" said Randolph, surprised. "Some information, probably, which you desire respecting affairs in our State?"

"No; I take but little interest in any State as a State. This world is to me only a vast concourse of sound and broken human ware, and I am permitted to tinker therein for a while. That is my only view of life. As for ideas of patriotism, or liberty, or State rights"—with a smile and shrug, "I leave them to a higher class of physicians. Nations and their laws are sound and unsound, as well as bodies, I presume?"

Randolph bowed civilly, thinking what a mole like intellect it must be which could not see beyond its own petty work. A man who did not care for his State!

"My business regarded yourself, solely," said Broderip, with the same repressed eagerness in his tone.

The young Kentuckian turned, surprised.

"I understand that you came North to engage in active life. Mr. Ottley was my informant. He stated that you wished occupation not inconsistent with your family dignity, and your own character."

If there were any sneers covert in the bland words, Garrick was the last man to suspect them. "That was certainly my wish," he said simply. "But," recollecting himself, with a bow, and a sudden assertant politeness, "I detain you from your guests, Doctor Broderip. If the business only concerns me, suffer it to wait your convenience. To-morrow, probably"—

"It shall not wait a moment, young man. I must do this before I sleep," with vehemence. "I have written a letter to Washington to-night, which will secure you a safe and honorable place, if you will accept it from me. It lies on my desk, the ink not yet dry Will you come and look at it?" moving hastily to a side-door.

Garrick followed his short, impatient steps through the long hal to the door of his private office, bewildered alike at the man's offer and his manner.

"It is a safe post," said Broderip, stopping with his hand on the door-knob. "Civil service. Not that I doubt your courage. But I must not repeat the old story of David and Uriah, eh?"

Half an hour afterward Mr. Randolph came out of the office, his face flushed, and his broad shoulders thrown back. He hurried to the music-room where the few guests were gathered, and after a

nervous glance about it to see if Rosslyn had yet appeared, drew Ottley aside.

"I feel like a man again! Your Doctor Broderip has found me standing room," he said, impetuously, "just as I was beginning to think the Randolphs were but useless lumber in the world, now-a-days. This proves that I was mistaken. There is no passport like a good name," complacently. "His letter showed a fair appreciation of that—very fair. It was one which would have pleased my family with him."

"Broderip usually does a graceful thing gracefully," said Ottley, dryly.

He crossed the room presently to where some young men were laughing at the surgeon's pungent jokes, for he had a caustic wit when he was exhilarated by society or wine.

"I thought you would not fail me," the lawyer said, heartily, putting his hand on Broderip's shoulder, as a boy might. "I'm glad you conquered your antipathy to the young fellow."

"Conquered it?" Broderip glanced over at the Southerner's sinewy figure and abstracted face, on which was the chiselling of generations of ease and culture. "Conquered it?" But to Ottley he only said, calmly, "The boy has the head of a scholar," because Randolph, as he had told him, was under his roof and eating his salt.

Society was greedy that Winter of invitations to these receptions, because they were given captiously, and for reasons; and then, Broderip and his house were both exceptional. Curiosity, if no higher motive, gave zest and interest to the faces of the guests; those of them, who had been there before this evening, were astonished and perplexed by his manner; there was a genial, hearty ring in his voice, a genuineness in his welcome, an unaffected sympathy with the common mood utterly different from his usual bizarre caprices, which they had begun to count upon confidently. Ottley thought that he had never seen the surgeon so conventional, or so agreeable.

Once he saw him, standing apart with Mr. Conrad, look beyond the old man at some figure in the distance, and wondered to himself whether it was love or hate that so unsealed his face, and lighted his eyes.

It was Margaret Conrad that Broderip was watching. She had left her father when he approached; it had become a habit with her to avoid him. He could see her, however, as she walked, leaning on a young officer's arm, down the long suite of apartments.

There were no filagree prettinesses in Broderip's rooms, no glittering surprises, or fatiguing beauty; they were warmly colored, with clear tints, large and liberal; there was a bust here, a picture there; their meaning was pure and quiet, but unassertant, as the atmos-

phere about a thoroughbred woman. You were not conscious of them while present, but when you were gone you remembered them as the place of all others where you could surest find a great rest, or a great pleasure. They were filled with music now—a full, triumphant tone.

Broderip stood apart; his eyes unconsciously followed the sweep of Margaret Conrad's cream-colored, lustreless drapery as it marked her quiet movement. The rooms had always been vacant to him before; they were filled now, never to be empty again. He thought of that with a new, poignant pain of delight in his narrow chest, and a scalding moisture in his eyes. He had not spoken to her after her entrance. Even then the words had died inarticulate in his throat. He could have cursed his childish diffidence. It seemed to him as if his life hung trembling in the balance, and a breath, a straw, might save or lose it. Now, when his judgment should be coolest, he was left to the mercy of every breath of passion or feeling. Presently, seeing that the officer and Miss Conrad appeared mutually tired of each other, he left her father with Ottley and ventured near her. She was beside the door of the little conservatory.

"Shall we go in? The air is sweet as that of a harvest-field in there," said Broderip, timidly.

So they stood side by side in the narrow, dim recess, with its shelving roof, the wintry night sky overhead, the beds of common flowers and vernal grass which his odd, simple taste had gathered, about them, the door framing as a picture the light and luxury within. The music had sunk to a low, intermittent sobbing, the unrest of some unhopeful pain. One could find in it the baffled moan of the sea, or the cry of an unloved woman. The man shivered before it like a reed in a cold wind.

Miss Conrad looked at the little figure beside her, at the sallow, insignificant mask of a face. Something which looked out through it made her draw back with an undefined alarm. It was a power which she had seen beneath no other man's eyes.

He turned with quick suspicion. "Why do you avoid me, Miss Conrad? I was not repulsive to you when you first knew me. Why do you fly from me?"

There was an involuntary movement, like a shiver of repugnance, through her slow, firm limbs, but she said, steadily,

"I was not conscious of it. Do I avoid you?"

"Is it from instinct?" The surgeon passed his handkerchief over his forehead once or twice.

"If I could tell you why, would it be best to do it?" knitting her black brows thoughtfully, and looking at him with her honest eyes eyes as honest and controlled as a Newfoundland dog's.

"I think it would be best," gravely. "I have a reason. Do not

fear that you will hurt me, either," smiling. "I am a callous man by nature, and I am no longer young, as you see." But he laid one hand over his chest, and shrank back into himself as he said it, unconsciously.

"I owe you such gratitude—" remorsefully.

"I levy no taxes of gratitude," with a fierce rasp in his tone. "People will tell you that only hard cash will glut my greed with my patients. But from you—it was scarcely gratitude that I desired from you, Miss Conrad;" the voice was growing sickly and shrill as that of one of his patients asking for draughts to quench thirst.

Miss Conrad still stood dumb; she was no more used to analyze her own emotions, than when she was a sober, wide-eyed baby on her father's knee; but she usually had found no difficulty in either putting a proper price-value on her companions, or in telling them what it was. But she shrank from plain words with this man as if it were her own heart she was going to sting and rudely chafe. In one sense he seemed so feeble to her, in another, so strong.

"I have nothing to say that will hurt you," she said at last. "But I will tell you the truth. I am a half-educated, blunt girl, used to plain, blunt people; you have excited, puzzled, wearied me. I do not choose to suffer pain."

Red heats crept out through the colorless flesh of his face and throat. "That is all?" with a quick smile. "You will learn to hate me then, because I am a stranger? Now, when we first met, Miss Conrad, I could have sworn that we had been friends long ago, in some country, of our own, from which we came, and to which we would return. There was not a trick of your manner, or a feature of you in mind or body with which I did not feel myself familiar, which was not dear to me—as a friend. I cannot conceive a time—" slowly, and writing with his forefinger in the beds of soft mould, "I cannot conceive a time, past or to come, when you were not, and will not be to me all that you are now."

She shrugged her broad, white shoulders. "It has not been so with me. You have humbled and pained me. I am not used, willingly, to bear pain."

Broderip was silent. For the first time it occurred to him that if she ever loved him, his fate would be hers. His own losses he could bear, but hers, when the trial came to her—what then?

"I never meant that you should suffer through me. I resolved again and again in these first days when I knew you, that your life should never know contact with mine."

She drew suddenly back, shaken as never in her life before; one would have thought that the blood had been struck back to her heart with one fierce blow of disappointment. She put her hand to her forehead with an effort for breath.

"I wish the day when I knew you, never had been! You have hurt me."

He stooped forward, then drew back, controlling himself. "How did I hurt you?"

For the first time in her life, she made a womanish attempt at concealment, and affecting a commonplace tone, said:

"You brought a strange world before me, Doctor Broderip; you made me feel all that I might have been, but am not. You differ from us; from me and my people; the difference amuses and rouses my father, but it has filled me with unrest and discontent."

"This does not seem to me like hate?" said Broderip. He thought he spoke aloud, but no sound passed his thin, dry lips. His fingers buried in the grass beside him, tore at it, bringing up a handful of leaves of musk-plant and gilly-flowers, turning the air into a spicy, aromatic breath. He went from her, unsteadily, letting them drop from his relaxed hands, his face grave, but his little frame trembling with pleasure; he put his hands over his eyes looking out into the clear night, saying to himself, that this did not look like hate; that every man had a right to the love of wife and child, and that his right was coming coming. Looking out and up as if in the simplicity and height of his joy he were telling God of it.

Was this Margaret that waited for him? She herself felt, with a helpless impatience, that some prop—self-reliance, common sense, perhaps had been taken from her, and she had sunk down, weak and pitiable; yet the change was nothing to a casual eye. The solid white limbs had drooped into an appealing grace, a faint color softened the thick, wax like skin, her gray eyes, moist and brilliant, followed him with a half angry, half frightened look. The light touched dimly the heavy folds of her dress, and the scarlet bands through the crown of lustreless black hair. For the first time, the power of her peculiar and great beauty forced itself upon him; for men needed to be, in a measure, *en rapport* with her to perceive it, and then acknowledged it reluctantly, so contrary was it to the ordinary types.

But the surgeon was in no mood to criticise the change. It was there, and it was no instinct of aversion to him that had caused it.

Coming back to her, he began to talk to her of the music and the plants; he was as usual controlled and quiet, but it was the control of a thorough content with himself and her, and with the relation between them. She saw, and thought it weak and boyish, but she cowered before it. He drew out of his pocket at last the string of rose-colored sea shells which he had found, and she had afterward given to him, letting them fall over his fingers to catch the uncertain light.

"Do you notice the color?" he said. "It is but the first blush of life, the tint of the dawn, or a scentless bud, meagre and chilly.

Yet, sometimes I leave them on the table by my pillow, and, when I waken, the morning light draws a curious glow from them. Shall I tell you the picture which my second sight reads in it?"

She did not answer, moved as if she would have passed him, then sank back again against the wall.

"Let me tell you what that future is which I see there. No other human being shall ever hear the story if you will not. Let me tell you."

She looked at him; his face was pale, his eyes held her motionless. The story forced itself through them without words.

Margaret lifted her hand before her face. "Not now," she whispered. "I'm not as reasonable a woman as I thought I was; I do not know what this is that is coming to me. Let me go. This heat, this music stifles me."

He started forward, hiding his own balked sense of disappointment. But she was so helpless, he thought, so pure, this calm, self-reliant girl; as innocent as in the days of her childhood, not knowing what it was that was coming to her lonely maiden heart. She was different from these stale and gaudy young women about them, who had chattered of lovers and marriage from their cradles. He was very careful with her, very tender, and, seeing how pale and haggard her face appeared out in the light, did not even ask her if she would hear the story another day. He would not frighten her; he could wait; he was used to waiting.

But when he had left her with her father, he made a pretext to go out, and hurrying to his own room, thrust his burning head out of the window into the cool night wind, stroking back the thin black hair from his low, heavily marked forehead. It was no boyish glow of pleasure, nor even the gratified hope of a lover; it was a man's delirium of triumph. "It is the birthright of men," he said. "It is mine—mine." Tears came to his eyes, and rolled down over his thin jaws. Presently he went to the fire, near which stood a delicate little table of Florentine mosaic, and beside it a dainty easy-chair which evidently had never been occupied. Broderip touched the spring of a secret drawer, and drew out of it scissors, thimble, all the fanciful little implements for a woman's sewing; even some half-finished bits of embroidery which he had stolen once from Margaret's basket. It was a boyish thing to do, and he turned them over with a weak smile. He leaned his elbow on the mantle-shelf, looking down at the empty chair. Many a time had he stood there before, thinking that the light actually fell on her smooth folded hair, and that the skirt of her dress touched his foot.

"If she ever should come now," he thought, anxiously, "she might not be pleased that I had tried to counterfeit her presence through these things. Some day I'll burn them."

Then he hid them again, and went down to his guests with a still brightness in his face which made Ottley turn more than once to observe him. He went from one to the other, seeking out, and talking with a peculiar gentleness to the few who were neglected, according to his custom, but he hardly saw or heard them. The rooms seemed vacant to him, except for the figures of the wife and children who were coming. But he kept the little orphan boy, Phil, near him all the evening after this, and treated him with a strange tenderness as if the child had almost suffered wrong. "Phil shall have his chance," he said, softly. "Phil shall have his chance."

CHAPTER XV.

IN THE ENCHANTED LAND.

ROSSLYN was grave and zealous before the mirror in the dressing-room that evening, quite unconscious of her vanity, or of Friend Blanchard's amusement as she waited for her by the fire. The old Quaker's carnal nature had rebelled against her own brown and gray clothes all her life, and it took a vicious delight, now, in Ross' fresh, high-tinted beauty and dress.

She noticed that Rosslyn had become oddly *en rapport* with herself lately. She had grown suddenly conscious of her own failings; had bitterly accused herself of being useless and ungrateful in her letters to her grandfather, as Friend Blanchard found from his misspelled, anxious replies; two or three times, too, she had found her in her room crying over the pages of her little Bible; then again she would be filled with acute vanity from crown to foot, as to-night when she had persisted in undoing the coiffeur's work, because, she said, the gold dust he had sifted through her hair, killed its lustre. She stood now, threading her fingers through its delicate rings of gold which fell about her throat, and caressing the small cleft chin, the blue-veined forehead and cheek all dewy fresh

and faintly tinged as a baby's, with a look of as keen pleasure as if she had been a passionate lover of herself.

"Now, that is all class-pride in Ross;" thought the old lady excusingly. "It pleases her to think that no good thing is denied to her order, although it is so low as to be out of sight of these people."

Whereas, Ross' idle brain was concerning itself with no problems of caste, but wondering how many of the richly dressed women about her had married for love; hoping, believing, that they had done so, but thinking that the women who had been chosen by the masters among men had not always been the fairest or noblest; following a train of hazy fancies in which Ruth among "the alien corn," and the nut-brown maid, and Maud Muller's tattered gown had place; thinking, too, how the chosen maiden had always been purified and adorned before the king came to set the crown upon her, from Cinderella to Esther. "With oil of myrrh and sweet odors," she said, as she looked down at the wavy folds of her new blue dress, delighted with the pearly sheen on it; and hung the white lilies in her hair, which it had taken a week's earnings to buy.

Mrs. Ottley, in pink and pearls, swept up to Friend Blanchard. "So charmed to find Miss Burley here!" she whispered with the anxious, honeyed affability which she always had ready to screen the stern face of society from the young person; as who should say to that Rhadamanthus: "What though she designed a chamber wall-paper to pay her last week's butcher's bill; yea, took the wages in her hand, and paid it: What though she came up out of regions unknown in your geography, yet pass her by, uncondemned: or let mercy temper justice!"

"She is becoming quite one of us," she buzzed confidentially to the Quakeress, who watched her as a grim dog might a fly which he was too lazy to brush away. "Mr. Ottley says her beauty is a positive luxury for his eyes; a leetle slow and dull, the dear girl, may be; but then our girls now a-days are so bookish, and musical, and gay, that it is quite a relief to find one who drags a little in conversation. If you could impart to her the slightest flavor of manner, now, dear Mrs. Blanchard. The merest *soupçon*—that indefinable some thing," with an airy flutter of her fingers. "It marks the lady, you know. But," with a sigh, "*nascitur, non fit*, as my husband says. Poor thing! She is so good-humored, with her deficiencies!"

"Do you mean that girl with the golden hair?" said Mrs. Wells, one of two young married ladies who were discussing croup in a corner. "She always seems to me healthy and happy all over; as if she had just had a good laugh, and felt the better for it."

"Rosslyn is dear Mrs. Blanchard's child," interjected Mrs. Ottley, smiling down on them. "By the way, I heard it was your inten-

tion to adopt her?" with a sly look. "Society has been beforehand with you, I fear."

"Society seems to have made an asylum of itself," was growled from the other corner. There was a flutter and silence as this shell fell. The Quakeress rose, and going gently over to Ross, made a low buzz of talk about her to fend off any chance shots.

It was Mrs. Van Fitter that had spoken. There was no defence against Mrs. Van Fitter.

Friend Blanchard was invincible in the endless struggles of social life. She had a weapon for every antagonist; if the wit lanced was keen, hers was keener. She had a reasonable life, common sense, and refinement, to oppose to their like. She had a shield of indifference and good-humor, on which to catch the stings of Mrs. Ottley and her genus; but when she approached the leather-skinned mass of flesh robed in velvet, which sat on the other side of the fire, she laid down her arms, and surrendered at discretion.

"Would javelin or battering ram affect a mud wall?" she used to ask, smarting under her defeat. She stood by Ross, now an angry blush at the remembrance coming to her hollow cheeks. It was Cæsar drowning in the muddy puddle of the Tiber.

But it was not her nerveless stolidity which formed Mrs. Van Fitter's stronghold—in that there was danger of competition.

The Van Fitters were old. The English tourist who lately discovered that we were a new nation, and gave the proofs in his book, had not met with this family. Kortright Van Fitter was one of the first Swedish settlers in Philadelphia. They could prove that he settled in Wicaco thirty years before the ancestry of any other city family. From that time until the present they had held residence in Philadelphia. The house in which Kortright Van Fitter had lived was still standing; it was a junk shop in Front Street, in Southwark.

These were facts; on these you could base a legitimate aristocracy. You could not deny that in view of them Penn and his followers, and all succeeding hordes of newer-comers, were intruders, and people of yesterday. They might possess wealth, culture, piety and genius, but these were doubtful, transitory things; at the best, here with one generation and gone the next. But that Kortright Van Fitter had been the oldest settler in Philadelphia, that the family had never left it—these were stubborn facts; a birthright of distinction, impregnable, and immutable, which you could not away with, any more than you could deny the junk shop facing the Delaware.

Mrs. Van Fitter (by blood and name, the family intermarried, by rule), was a ponderous, yellow wooden tower. If there ever had been joints in it, the uncompromising dignity of the race had affected them, for they were seldom manifest. When she spoke to you, the

whole structure, with its hangings, the color of faded moss, the head turret, with its hawk-like projections, its watery eye-windows, its icicles of diamonds dangling from the sides, turned on you as on a pivot, and faced you with the two centuries of the Van Fitter residence looking through it. The Radical must have been strong in his integrity who would meet that ghost as man to man, and not quail before it.

Mrs. Van Fitter lived alone with it, in a wide rambling old house in Pine Street, the second landmark of the family. It was built of English brick, facing the street with dogged boldness; with no clinging green and crimson ivy, or grape-like clusters of purple Wistaria, such as softened the old age of its neighbors with a hint of to-day: even when the moss had tried to vail its unflinching ugliness, the old woman had ordered that it should be scrubbed off weekly. She abode there as on a rock, while the waves of newcomers ebbed and flowed about it.

Inside, there were two or three pieces of rare china, a set of plate encrusted with the family crest, tattered carpets, faded old brocades; there were wine stains on the cellar-way, relics of the dinners of the Van Fitter magnates, a century ago; there was a rickety suite of inlaid ivory and gilt chamber furniture, with ragged blue drapery, which was reported to have belonged to Marie Antoinette. There were portraits, too, of half-a-dozen wooden-tower bodied men (they had not cared to preserve their women); men with long upper lips, and sagging chins, and black hair growing down over lack-lustre eyes. Nature, it seemed, had not often taken the liberty to bring any fantastic fairy gifts of beauty or wit with her to the silver-mounted cradle in the second story, in which the Van Fitter babies had looked wide-awake, with their beady, black eyes through life, and found no mystery in it; while Irish Nora's urchin in the garret smiled in its sleep, dreaming of the years to come.

John, the only son, was now in Paris; he had married the daughter of a Market Street grocer; "being young," his mother said, and "the girl, doubtless, a scheming, indelicate person." He kept her *au quatrième* in a shabby *quartier*, and with his black-a-vised face and mastiff jaw, was nagging the poor little thing into her grave, while he sauntered from *salon* to *salon*, too dull to talk, and too miserly to gamble. Meantime the old woman decked herself in her diamonds and dingy moss-colored velvet, darned her caps, and starved herself and her servants, in order that she might send him the meagre rents untouched.

People who had no antiquity of their own brought in hers, with the cobwebs about the port bottles, to give authority to their entertainments.

Now the old woman was not ill-tempered, but she had, as became her, a keen scent for plebeian blood, and she had been upon Ross'

trail during the Winter. To-night, seeing her here, and apparently enjoying her own beauty to the full, she, in the language of the chase, "gave tongue;" in a low trained voice, to be sure, but it was a hound's "tongue" no less, and summoned Tray, Blanche and Sweetheart to fall upon the prey and worry it.

They did not join her; the other women secretly liked Miss Burley and her odd little house, and simple, well-cooked suppers to which she and Friend Blanchard gave them such hearty welcome; besides, the little artist was too small game, any one could see, for the Van Fitter blood and diamonds; they gathered in front of the fire, therefore, to keep from Ross the chatter about "the asylum which society had become," and "the highways and byways from which its inmates were gathered," and how that she "was jostled daily by those merchants with wholesale shops who ruled us now; we would soon find tradeswomen and shop-girls in our assemblies."

Ross, deaf and dumb, meanwhile, was pulling some bits of heliotrope anxiously from her bouquet, remembering that Mr. Randolph had called it once a rank-scented weed; thinking how easy it would be, if she had a friend, to serve him in every trifle, to humor him in even such little whims as this; wondering would she ever have a friend? Once—; but that was long ago, long ago.

Just then she noticed that a woman's voice, which had been sounding through the buzz monotonous and dull, suddenly rasped louder, and she caught one or two alarmed glances toward herself.

Little Mrs. Wells came to the rescue. "Do you take an interest in the Sanitary Commission, Mrs. Van Fitter?"

But the diversion was unlucky. "None, whatever. The war is a matter with which our family have no concern, Mrs. Wells. They never have voted, not endorsing a republican form of government. They have always left politics to the masses. Mr. John Van Fitter has been in Europe since the beginning of the war. There is something in this carnage repulsive to a refined mind."

"Many representatives of our old conservative families are in Europe," said Mrs. Ottley.

"The Southern forces, however, are made up of their best blood, I understand; they are a race of chevaliers, and prepared for war by their duels and tournaments; and I have no doubt there are, too, some quite respectable families represented among the Federal officers. But it is surprising that they are willing to command an army of mercenary hirelings who have gone South for plunder when work failed them at home."

There was a sudden, startled pause, as Ross Burley came into the circle with a quick, sweeping step, her face colorless, her eyes burning under their straight lids. "My grandfather is a private in the Federal army. Did you say plunder, Madam?" in a low, quiet voice. For a moment she seemed to absorb the atmosphere of the

room, and to stand out, clear-cut, against the back-ground of commonplace women in her indignant beauty.

"Who is your grandfather?" said Mrs. Van Fitter, raising her eye-glass; and, with the words, Ross, who had been half blinded by her sudden passion, perceived for the first time who was her antagonist. So poor and pitiable was a woman, old and repulsive as this! The girl flushed with a guilty sense of shame, as though she had trodden on some of God's slighted creatures. Some day, perhaps, she, herself would be old and ugly and venomous!

She stood still a moment, and then, coming closer, held out both hands, half soothing, half humbly.

"I am sorry," the color coming and going on her face and neck, "I did not see that it was an aged person who spoke to me. 'Who is my grandfather?' He is an old man who has toiled hard all his life; now, when he might have rested, he has given up the few years left, to liberate men whose lot has been harder than his own. He did not go for plunder. But I am afraid, madam, that you cannot understand," and she turned gently away.

Somehow she had struck the key-note; the room was filled with the sisters and wives of soldiers; but she did not see their friendly, approving looks as she hurried over to where her gloves lay, and, taking them up, went into a side room to drop down on the edge of the bed, and cry in her old passionate, sobless way. Friend Blanchard took her hand and held it, without speaking, when Ross whispered, "How did she know where his gray head was lying to-night? and what right had she to be there, thinking of—of other people who said that his poverty 'was a stain which would never wash away?' No doubt they all thought he went for plunder into their State," the tears rolling down her cheeks. To all of which vague outcry Friend Blanchard gave no reply, but listened with a troubled, shrewd smile. A solid, yellow finger covered with rings tapped on Ross' hair authoritatively, a pillar of velvet rose above her eyes when she dried them and looked up.

"I think," the heavy jaws moving unsteadily, "I think, Miss Burley, I understand, perhaps, better than you supposed. We read in history of many heroic deeds among among the people. At any rate, your grandfather has a good little girl. I wish I had one that loved me as well," and then, with an approving tap or two, to which Ross replied by an hysteric smile, having no breath left, the old lady moved mountainously down the stairs.

"There is something in it, after all," said Friend Blanchard, thinking of the Van Fitter two-century residence.

"Come down," begged Mrs. Ottley, patting a damp towel to Ross' crimson cheeks. "Only consider your eyes, my dear! There is a friend of mine here, too, whom I wish to present to you; out of the land of duels and tournaments. But I forgot, he knew you."

The damp towel had been effective, apparently; the fiery spot was suddenly gone; Ross stood up, quite cool and grave.

She went down with Friend Blanchard, resolved, as she descended the stairs, to live entirely for her grandfather in this world, shutting out all Van Fitters, or others who would hold him in contempt. She resolved it again and more vehemently as she crossed the hall and saw a tall, athletic figure in the doorway, with a mass of curly brown hair.

Other women had devoted their lives to their country or to the heathen, why should not she give hers to the old man who loved her? It was not worth so much, her life, after all; nobody asked it of her; she was not well-taught, nor quick, nor winning as other women.

They passed down the long room, Ross' brown, friendly eyes returning smile for smile, never turning to the doorway. But the figure was there, immovable, not coming a step closer, she saw that.

She was not attractive as these other women; they were sought and won; they did not deck themselves vainly to please an eye that never looked at them. They had the ten talents; they had the many cities to rule over; she had her one poor little gift her beauty. If the old man was proud of it, if she was a "Sweetheart" to him, he should have the comfort of it always. He never should know that she had been unfaithful to him. She would give her whole life to him in this world; saying this over and over to herself with a dull, desperate feeling that, for the world beyond, it mattered little.

Here were the zest and juices of life; here were the sun and the wind, and the vineyards of grapes ready for gathering. But they were not for her—not for her. Beyond, there was rest; but she was not ready for rest, she had just begun to live and work. There were some women who had never worked nor lived; who had died unloved.

They stopped to bow and smile to Broderip, who met them, and then stood aside in the shadow of a bay window; her heart ached with a gnawing pain under the bunch of lilies as she thought of those lonely women. She was not one of them; she had the old man yonder to love her. And yet the bitter tears rose against her hot lids as if she had been one.

These fancies, common enough to most young girls, were novel to Ross; they gave her proportionate sharp pain. The wailing music became the outcry of her solitary, wasted life; it meant to her that she should lay it down, its work unfulfilled, its happiness untasted, to go with empty hands and empty heart into that vague Beyond where husband nor child should ever follow her.

But a woman's life is made up, like the old image of gold and

clay. The minute which begins with fierce questionings of Fate, ends probably in tying a child's shoe, or in the necessity of singing a patient lullaby. The answer is given to her, if she dared to read it.

So Ross, because two or three people came to her to be amused, found her forced smile, in spite of herself, growing natural. One of them was a bashful boy of nineteen, weighted with self-consciousness to the burdened earth; and she took him in charge with a motherly pity; to be sure, she felt as if a great gulf lay between them; he was in a world which she had given up. Something like a ghost coming back to help living people.

Mr. Ottley, fresh and all alive, came up to her; the very touch of his chubby little hands was somehow hearty and invigorating. Ross and he had always been allies; because, principally, they were both always "present" to the moment, ready for whatever it brought — whether pathos, music, fun or a good supper.

He stood inspecting the rooms and passers by, then turned on her, pulling the fringes of his moustache, his keen, black eyes on her face. "What is it, Miss Rosslyn? I see clouds and rain," gently.

"I think I have been in a bad humor," with a frown and blush.

"That's not all; not all," his fingers on his chin thoughtfully. "You've been turning your soul inside out to look at it; or your life. I'm sorry—sorry. I thought I had found one young woman who was satisfied to let her internal economy alone."

Ross smiled uneasily.

"It is bad, bad! This is it, Miss Burley," looking at her with a half grave, half quizzical face. "I'm a fatherly old fellow, as you know, and take an interest in the young girls about me. But they are all of them afflicted in a way which keeps them abed half of the time, or else pining and hungry for something they have not got: love, or a career. I don't know what is the matter: genius, or bad livers or spines, perhaps."

"And I had neither of the three, you mean to say?"

"Precisely. Now, you see I am not afraid to speak truth to you. You're a healthy girl. The very enamel of your teeth is unbroken, I dare say. Morbid longings and reveries are not the work you were made for. There's no diseased overplus in your brain toward ideality or causality, or even form or color."

"Neither artist nor poet, then?" laughed Ross.

"No. Your head is too round."

"'A life of nothings, nothing worth,'" she quoted, with a little bitterness under the jest.

"There it is! Little girl, let your fate alone," earnestly. "That is not your affair. You must not be vexed that I thought you suited for everyday work. You have the truest, most friendly eyes

I ever saw. When I first looked at them, I thought, that woman will be a helper in the world. Perhaps to but one man, perhaps to many."

They both stood quiet for a few moments.

"I'm not a church member," he said, rubbing his bald forehead. "But I think we ought not to be impatient to find our place. There is One who 'knows what things we have need of.'"

"I know," said Ross, under her breath. There had not been a day since she was a child that her grandfather's fancy about her had not grown more real to her. He said it often, even now, "The Good Man has a keer of Rossline." The words had had their effect in making her what she was.

"Yes, that is my experience, though I'm not a religious man, Miss Burley. I tell you," after a pause, "if women knew what their power was, they wouldn't sigh for 'a career.' A woman falls in love with a man as he might be, not as he is, and if she marries him, she can make him that, if she pleases. That, or something meaner than he was."

Ross was silent. Neither of them looked toward Mrs. Ottley's fluttering pink and plumes.

"I think you will be a helpful wife, some day, Rosslyn," he said. "And then, 'between us, be Truth.' That is a good rule for husband and wife."

"I think I will be a good wife, if I marry," said Ross, gravely.

"Here is that young Kentuckian coming this way," he said, after a while. "I'll leave him to you; you are a hospitable little soul." He turned to meet Randolph, whispering to her beforehand "not to be bored if he did prose a little. He was a thorough good fellow at bottom."

He went away a moment after, thinking that the young man had seemed dull and awkward, even boorish, when brought into contrast with the girl's simple grace; he had thought him even courtly this morning. The few words he heard of their conversation were formal and insipid enough.

"Was her cold better?"

"He had been amused in the city? Had found many old acquaintances?"

"On the contrary, he never had been so solitary or so friendless," and then an embarrassed pause.

The words in which a man shows to his God, or to a woman, that he loves, are weakest and coarsest when they are audible. But what was Ottley to know of any voiceless language between the two who were paying lip service in platitudes to each other? How could he know that Ross' nerves grew tense at one glance which fell on her, or why her delicate face grew colorless as at a stroke, and the irritable nostril dilated, and the brown eyes turned from

side to side as a deer at bay? How could he know the vague terror with which the womanly woman put back and deferred the love for which her soul was famished? It was akin to the chill and fear with which a new born infant draws its first breath of the great world's delicious air. How could any man know, that, under all the pain and ecstasy of that first knowledge of what was coming to her, there was an uneasy consciousness of her eyes, her mouth, her shrinking person, a guilty remembrance that her hair was curly and golden, and that she had heard Randolph talk of somebody's locks of chestnut brown.

For it was love that silently spoke to her. Randolph threw aside his sham of friendship with disgust. Having dared to tell himself that he loved her, why should not she know it? Yet, having faced it, he was half shocked at the force and strength of the feeling. It was the sudden leafage and blossoming of a plant which had rooted itself unseen into unknown depths of his nature.

It gave utterance to his manhood; there was no thought or hope which he had known, no day of the past or the future, which did not find in it expression.

Boys worship an ideal angel; but a man at Randolph's age loves the woman whom the exigencies of his peculiar adult nature crave; the woman whose features, while yet unseen, his need of her has taught him to limn and color. Somewhere, from the foundation of the world, she has been set apart for him.

He loved her; but he would not tell her so to night; he delayed the exquisite, tender rapture which the future brought to him; he would inhale of the perfume of the bud before the flower opened; he would stand with his hand upon the gate, before he ventured in. It never occurred to him that the flower might prove a weed after all, or that inside of the gate of the future, there might lie muddier paths and frozen fields, instead of the hills of Beulah whereon the winds of heaven blew.

He said not a word to her of love, yet he was jealous to know her every unspoken thought; he begrudged every glance or smile which did not come to him, like a bee bringing honey to its home.

As to the *ci-devant* little market girl, if she forgot that long-ago herb-stall, or the illiterate wagoner whose basely-born grandchild she was—forgive her; the world was made anew for her that night. She was so happy with her new blue dress and pure lilies, her delicate, rare face, her shimmering golden curls. She had brought him her one little talent, and she knew he thought it worth a king's ransom. She wished she could show him what lay beneath the tender vail of beauty and of flesh. She had no intellect, nor accomplishments, perhaps; but she would be so loyal and helpful a friend, her love could be tender and fierce beyond that of women.

So they sat together, or walked through the open, almost vacant

rooms, pausing where the chilly, Wintry moonlight threw fantastic shadows on the floor, or the fires made pictures of home about the hearth, talking meaningless words, or silent—her nervous fingers on his arm.

It was the spectral moonlight of the old enchanted castle; it was the firelight of most happy homes; the mellow tones of the carpets and hangings deepened in hue; the friendly faces about them bade them God speed; the music was laden with prophetic voices that called to them aloud. This was no dwelling in solid squares of brick and marble; it was the country where, for a space, they walked together in singleness of heart; where the passion and pain of their lives began to run fiercely through their blood, where old, silly fancies of their childhood came unbidden to talk to them again, bringing tears to their eyes, and seemed more reasonable to them than all the experience or knowledge of later days.

Well, well! we all know the old story of Baucis and Philemon; how a saint, sent by the good God to help the children of men, began with this poor herdsman and his wife; how, after his fingers had been laid on their eyes, they saw that their hut was in truth a dim and lofty temple; how the patch of brown corn stretched and darkened, into a forest, where the winds from all quarters of the world cried at night, and all birds sang; how their coarse rags turned into garments of grace, betokening worth and rank; and how that, on their callous, hard features, there began to dawn for each other a strange and notable beauty.

School-boys will tell you that when mortals enter the enchanted land, where Rosslyn and Garrick were to night, they are led there by one of the defunct race of gods; one in whose alleged antics we find neither reason, humor, nor pathos; he is usually pictured as a blundering blind boy; Puck without Puck's wit.

But we who have travelled out of foggy youth on toward noon, where the thoroughfares are crowded, and the mysteries which meet us are more real and darker than death: we can testify that the old story of the herdsman and his wife is true; that we have seen it repeated in a thousand of these commonplace houses about us; have seen the magic touch laid on the eyes of selfish old men and debased young ones; upon the hard-worked mechanic and his worn-out wife, struggling with many children and a small income; upon the vain, idle girl; upon the Magdalen herself; and, for all, the tedious homes widened into a sudden palace; the coarse, hackneyed world grew generous and pure; their own lives became, for the time, heroic poems; the chance came to them, as to us all, as to Ross and her lover, to be forever true, humble, chivalric. So we are tempted to leave the witless Cupid to the school-boys, and to believe that the saint still wanders among men in the guise of an honest human love, and that of all of His messengers sent to bring us home, it is the nearest and most akin to its Master.

CHAPTER XVI.

DISENCHANTED.

On the next morning Ross was astir at dawn; her day's work was done before breakfast, and laid aside; clean, broad sheets of paper in her desk; it seemed to her, her fingers had never been so firm or free, and that the wreaths were different from any she ever had finished before. Everybody's work was done by noon; she was a keen-eyed mistress, and to-day she went from garret to cellar like a March wind. She left sunshine and quiet behind her, to be sure; the warm, damp light coming in gladly at the open windows, found cosy, bright rooms, cheaply furnished, but spotless from dust, with warm, clear-tinted hangings which toned cheerfully with the rich, reddish browns and yellows of the unpainted wood-work, and the glittering fire-irons. There were pots, in which grew plants with blue and lilac blossoms, and the gold and snuff-colored wall flowers; there were dwarf morning-glories vining over the window-panes and opening their moist cups, of rose and crimson, shyly at dawn; there were tables drawn up by the fires, covered with papers and books waiting to be read, and rolls of Ross' neatly-folded sewing; there were bits of landscape on the walls, like windows, through which you could look from the Jersey farm-house, into a windy Scotch moor, or at a low sea rising under a burning sun upon the patient beach, or at the afternoon shadows creeping over open, green turf cleft through a thick forest.

Ross was restless; she came up the road now, holding a shaggy cloak about her shoulders, her dress tucked up from her Balmoral skirt, jumping from stone to stone in the icy wagon-track in preference to the beaten, safe path upon the bank; stopping at different points to look at the little domain to see how it would appear to a stranger, if any chanced to ride that way to-day.

Nearer town, the road was lined with genteel villas and Swiss cottages, made of pine boards; but this was undisguisedly a farm-house; ground was plenty, the fields about it had a loose, lazy, liberal way of falling into useless, dark, mysterious little jungles, from which Ross, to this day, had an uncertain dread of bears; and knobbing themselves into warts of rock, which, in Summer, were a tangle of partridge-berries and maiden's hair. Then there was a gully filled with water, in which fish had been caught, and which Ross called Burley's creek, and there was a barn, with a properly red roof, at one side, and an apple orchard, with logs holding up the old crooked backs, at the other, and walnut and mulberry trees all out of place with regard to the landscape, and turkeys down by the barn, and, on sunny days, a peacock strutting before the door. The day was one of soft coloring, the sky filled with curdled clouds,

wet and sunny, like the scum and froth of Winter's snow-storms. The slopes from the house and the orchard showed a pale green through the brown, powdered with white frost. The old house was ruggeder and broader than when we saw it last, and had taken more ground to itself in its old age; but it had put on the colors of the ground also, and stained its bluish-gray stone walls with blackish red and green, and lichens hung about it, quiet, ragged, and gray as an old man's hair and beard.

Ross leaned her chin on her hand, looking over the fence, her eyes sparkling. "Would he like it? What a foolish question was that!" After a while she drew a long sweet breath, as if she could taste her happiness in it, and went into the barn to talk to John about the heifer. It had been a present to her from her grandfather last Christmas, and it was judged to be three-quarters Alderney. Now, Ross was secretly proud of it, and glad to have it to show to Mr. Randolph, who doubtless knew all about fine cattle.

John, a gray-headed old fellow, with a face the color of his favorite tobacco, had seen her going to the barn, and hobbled out from the kitchen fire, and stood now by the stall, rubbing his knees with an aggrieved air of innocence, watching while she pulled down some clean straw for Bessy's bed, and hung up the halters. Five years ago John had run away (from work, Ross suspected, as much as his master), and found his way to them. She kept him, and paid him wages.

"It will give him the feeling of a freeman," she pleaded with her grandfather. "Besides, between rheumatism and laziness he'll surely starve."

"Hev yer way, sweetheart," Joe laughed. "They're a bad lot, in my 'pinion. I'm willin you an yer Quaker friends should use my office in the lumber-yard to bring em to, poor devils. Every man's a right to his liberty, 'cordin to me. I'm willin to help. But when they're free, I don't hanker after 'em."

Joe, busy with his lumber, left the management of the little farm usually to Ross, and she bore the burden of John like a hero.

To-day, however, she had a reason for wishing her house set in order. "The stable is untidy," she said sharply, "Uncle John. Bessy's bed is foul."

"Dat am a fac," laconically looking down. "But what for ye git in a passion, now, Miss Rossline? What's de bed of de beasts wurf troublin' 'bout, so long's yer soul am still in savin' reach an' prayin' ground?"

"Yes, I know. But I wish you would bring out Phil to clean here, if your leg pains you."

"Ef it pains? Dat's jess like de young 'uns, dey've got no feelins! But I'd be willin' to overlook all yer little failins, Miss Ross-

line, ef I thought ye'd got de pearl ob great price. Ef ye'd take a week, now, an' jess detarmine to come out ob it wid religion ——"

John's cloak of religion was always ready to cover the dirty stable, so Ross laughed. "I'll send you out some Arnica plaster," she said.

But he had the upper hand now, and was keen-witted enough to know how to torment her; went to work groaning, and holding his back. "Folks in de Norf is no better dan slave drivers," he mumbled, before she was out of hearing. "What 'd I kum hyur fur, but to draw one comf'ble breff of freedom before I died? An' its 'John hyur!' an' 'John dar!' from mornin' till night. Down in Virginny I was among ladies and gen'men, anyhow." And as soon as Ross was out of sight, hurried in to tell over his grievances in the kitchen, and his hopes "dat de day was near to hand when de cullored folks 'ud be up, and de white folks down, bress de Lord."

Ross went away with the red spot burning her cheek. "Sometimes I think I'll wash my hands of the whole of them," she muttered. "They never will make themselves fit for freedom; never."

But the disheartened feeling soon vanished; she had no time to speculate about races, or the maltreatment which their minds, more than their bodies, had suffered in slavery. Once, indeed, she thought, what would her new friend think of the helpless little caravan about her, the lame, halt and blind, yonder in the kitchen.

"It does not matter what he thinks!" with her decisive little nod. The world was so full of need and pain, and it was such a little portion of it her hands could lift! (though when it came to the weekly bills, and the undone work left for her, her hands found it heavy enough, sometimes.)

"He will see it as I do; and if he does not, no matter;" for Ross' feet were as firm under her as ever. She went in to cut the plaster herself; and then into the dining-room, where Matsy was setting out the lunch table; a little wiry bunch of bones and muscles, with a coffee-hued skin drawn over them. The old woman moved slowly about, as sweet and clean as her own butter; besides, she had turned Quaker lately, having fallen heir to a heap of Friend Blanchard's clothes; a thin cap was set over the short wooly fuzz, and her spectacles on top of that again, a sheaf of goose quills thrust in the waist of her drab dress, to hold her knitting-needle. Ross hesitated, the rose creeping from her cheek over her forehead and down her neck; then she brought a table-cloth, which she kept laid away, and smoothed out its satiny folds herself over the little round table, talking to Matsy meanwhile about John's rheumatism.

"It's only natterin' as ails him, honey. He's got too much white blood in him, dat ar John hes. Dem sort ob cullahed folks is all fermentin' now, wantin' dere rights. Dem's extry posies yer a

cuttin' for de table, Miss Rosslyn, heh? Talkin' of 'malgamation, de Lord knows, its not de cullahed folks as ought to insist on dat ar. It's on'y de meanest sort ob white blood dat comes into our veins, or eber has. It's not de pineapple preserbes yere gittin' out, honey?"

Ross put down the glass bowl with its clouded sirup hastily. "I thought a friend of Friend Blanchard's might be here before lunch," she said, and went restlessly out, while Matsy followed her, with a keen twinkle of her eye. "She's done lost herself, Miss Rosslyn. I'll go make some Virginny biscuits. Poor little gal! I'll hev a lunch as she'll be 'proud of, ef dat dratted flour don't run agin."

Perhaps after all he might not come. He had not said he would. But they had been talking another language than words, and Ross had but little doubt, only enough to send the hot and cold shiverings through her veins, as she ran up the stairs to her own little room, where her clothes lay in a snowy pile upon the bed, ready for her to dress. When she had bathed, and began to put them on over the fresh dewy-moist flesh, her hair clinging in damp rings about her forehead, and the impalpable, clean perfume shaken from their folds in the air, it seemed to her as if not to-day's, but all of her life's work was done, and she was making ready for a feast-day, which would last forever. She kept a watch on the bit of road seen through the walnut trees; she could see his horse there before its hoofs were heard.

She thought over and over, as she curled her hair, and fastened it back with a velvet snood, how she would take him over the farm, and show him all her old camping grounds, when she was little. What a wide world its few acres were to her then! They were half the world to the home-body, now. It never occurred to her that he might not be interested in it at all; nor did it once seem possible to her now that the story of her birth, or of the stall in the market, could hurt him. She thought of it, and then, alone as she was, a vivid blush dyed her brow and neck and bosom, she hid her face in her hands, with a sudden tremble in her lip and light in her eyes that said "Why, he loves me!" as she would not have dared to put it into words.

Now that the king had come to choose her, her life seemed a beautiful, innocent romance—only that she never would go back to the ashes like Cinderella. And then those old days were so dear! so dear! When she had put on the blue dress, with its black velvet band turned back from her throat and wrists, and a frill of lace within, she hurried down and out past the barn again, with a conscious, furtive look behind, like a child who is going to do a silly thing. There was a huge shed behind the clump of cedars. She unlocked the door and went in. There was an open square in the wall, the shutter of which was thrown back, and by the light of it

she could see the old Conestoga, with its canvas top, yellow from age, and the red body woven over with spiders' webs.

Joe had refused to sell it again and again. "It's worth nothin' but firewood and old iron to you," he said. "But it held somethin' in it that wur worth more nor all I've got now, to me. Not" he said to Rosslyn afterward, "that you ain't as dear to me now as then, sweetheart, an' I'm mighty proud of ye. But that little yaller-haired gal as used to sit on the bags at my feet ther, was altogether mine."

But Ross, with the new life coming to her, clung jealously to the old, and took it with her; she touched the old wagon softly as if she and her grandfather and it were going to be happy together, and stretching up to the great arches of bells hung on the wall, rang a peal on them that filled the whole Spring like day with the voices of her childhood. She rang them again and again. "I'll never hear any music better than that," said tuneless Ross, as she passed her hand tenderly over the rusty bells, and hung them more securely. Then she went out slowly.

"'Is this music i' th' earth or i' th' air?'"

She laughed, and blushed, and grew pale, and then shut the door and turned away from it. The stately figure, with its fur-lined overcoat, the fastidious face that bent to hers, admiring, yet supercilious, jarred somehow with the dusty old wagon and its bells, and did them dishonor.

They went side by side into the house. There was not a look or word which did not tell her that he loved her. Yet she was quiet and unsmiling, as though a gust of cold rain had swept through her holiday and chilled out its warmth and rose color. Whether she spoke or was silent, Garrick, however, was equally content. Under the mask of punctilious manner and dress, there was a lonely, slow old fellow, very tired of books and himself, who thought he had found home at last.

Friend Blanchard had driven to town early in the morning; so they were left alone during the long, quiet afternoon, before the great wood-fire, seated in two easy-chairs.

Sometimes they talked, but oftener they were silent. Fresh logs burned, the ashes fell in heaps upon the hearth; the red heat grew powdered over with gray. Outside, the sky clouded and cooled, and the snow began softly to fall; the world was hushed about them; its quiet lapped Garrick into certainty of possession; he bade fair, in fact, to be dilatory and visionary as a lover, as he had been in all the other chances of his life.

They had lunch — so Ross called it. To him it was as a meal which Adam and Eve ate in Paradise, while the world waited for them to enter into possession. Perhaps he was not conscious of the delicate damask, or the creamy flakes of Matsy's biscuit; but if one

had been coarse or the other sodden, Eden would not have been so vivid to him.

After the meal was over, he told her long stories of which he was generally the hero; not offensively, for about his own self, *per se*, Randolph was reticent and morbidly humble. But what did he know of the world outside of the farm in Kentucky, and the college, and his adventures there? Besides, he had a simple-hearted, eager desire to take her into his heart of hearts, and let her look out from there, and see life just as he saw it; how else were they to become one? Then, his home and inheritance never had seemed so important or dear to him as now, when he meant to take to them a mistress. He was going to gain a diamond, and it behooved him to find for it a proper setting. So he talked to her of the house and farm, of aunt Laura, of all the Randolphs and Pages, whose honorable blood had culminated in his own; prosing on, looking in the fire, not noticing that her work had fallen on her lap, and she had grown silent; that the face looking in the fire had become almost haggard in the last half hour, the blood setting in dark circles about her eyes as she saw the gulf between them widening—widening.

What could she, with her unclean childhood, ever be to him? But what was she to do? How could she drag it out before him? He held her at a vague but absolute distance of respect and homage; he invited no confidence, said no word that implied he ever desired to be nearer to her than now; she could not force herself and her history upon him. If he ever asked her to be his wife, she would put him from her, and give no reason. She hardened down into that resolve; and Ross had a temper a good deal like molten steel—clear and liquid as water until it found its mould, and afterward, never to be bent or broken.

Finally he came, in his journey through the family annals, to the story of the will, which had become a festering spot in his own memory. He told it to her as if they had been already affianced, and their interests were one.

"The whole matter is the more galling to me," he said, "as the man Strebling, to whom the property was said to be left, is one for whom I have, above all others, an antipathy."

"James Strebling of Alabama?" Miss Burley looked toward the window, and her voice was husky as she spoke.

Randolph turned, surprised. "Yes; I did not know that you knew him."

She did not answer at once. "I do not know him. I should think there would be a great gulf between you and him, or you and his children." She rose, and then sat down again, passing her hand once or twice over her forehead, uncertainly.

"Strebling has but one child—Bob," said Randolph, carelessly.

"He's a weak, coarse-grained fellow, like his father. Traits come down in that way; the sins of the fathers, you know. The air about them seems always impure to me, though I have no reason for such a fancy. But I would not wish my sister to breathe it, or—or my wife."

The blood throbbed painfully back to his heart in the moment's silence that followed, but Rosslyn sat cold and motionless, her hands folded on her knees, her aquiline profile cut clearly between him and the gray window light. For the first time he saw that it had curiously hard lines in it, that the very brown eyes which had seemed to him to be the softest, tenderest in the world, to hold all a wife's and mother's passion and pain latent in them, had a flinty look of dull endurance, which was new to him. It did not alter when she turned toward him.

"What have you done in this matter?" she said, going back to the will with forced interest, as if she held it up to ward off any other topic.

"I have done nothing as yet," stroking his beard thoughtfully "It was Friend Blanchard who first told me the story. I've been thinking it over. 'To make haste slowly,' that is my motto. To-morrow I go to Washington to receive my appointment. I may go from there to Kentucky for a few days. But what would you have me do, Miss Burley?"

"I can hardly tell," passing her hands one over the other wearily. "It is so long ago. But if the negro is still living, you could learn from him if he concealed the will, and if he did, it is not too late to make restitution."

"You mean, to restore the property to Strebling?"

"That is all you can do, if you do anything." The brown eyes were duller with each reply, the light so gone out of her face that it seemed homely and stolid. What were his property, or himself to her? Garrick looked at her, at the fire, at his boots on the parti-colored rug, coughed, and rising, began to walk about.

"It never occurred to me that Hugh might have retained the will."

There was no answer.

"Of course," hesitatingly, a fierce gleam in his womanish blue eyes, "if he did, my course is clear. But as for his mere assertion that he destroyed it, we do not accept negro testimony in Kentucky. How could I know that he was telling the truth?"

Downright Ross must hit the nail of truth on the head, though it went to the heart of the man she loved. "It would not be an easy sacrifice to make. One would be tempted to avoid it. But it would be honest."

Randolph gave a bitter, vacillating laugh. "It would *not* be easy. You use moderate words, Miss Burley. You do not under-

stand what it would be to stand alone in the world, without birthright, almost without a name."

"I think I can understand," said Rosslyn.

"It would not be easy," Randolph broke out impetuously, "on the eve of the day when you hoped to take the woman you loved to your old home, to your mother's grave, fancying that to live near it, would in some way make your new life more blessed, to give over home and graves to a man you despised, on the testimony of a negro. 'It would not be easy, but it would be honest,' to go to the only woman whom you ever wished to call wife without heritage, with a tainted name!"

"It would not matter to a woman who loved," said Rosslyn, standing up, the sorrowful eyes with an inexplicable loss in them fixed on his. "A woman would not care, I think, for birthright, or fortune, or name. It would be different to a man."

"Well, well! We are conjuring up ghosts after all, that, perhaps, have no existence. I will find there is no cause for trouble, doubtless," said Randolph, pausing in his walk near the window. "Friend Blanchard is returning," as a *coupé*, drawn by a pair of grays, came up the road. He turned with a look of chagrin; the day was gone and he had dallied with opportunity until it was too late; he had put his hand on the white dove which he would have lured to his breast, and now she had escaped him again, for so his fevered imagination put it into words.

Friend Blanchard's old face came in the door, like a cheerful Winter's day. She glanced quickly from one to the other.

"I have brought thee some letters, Rosslyn. Garrick will make me welcome, while thee reads them," ensconcing herself by the fire, and opening her budget of gossip, and political news. But Randolph answered at random; there was a new idea in his crotchety brain.

Rosslyn? Strebling had spoken of some woman whom he knew here, and the name had fixed itself in Garrick's brain, always retentive of trifles. Rosslyn Comly. Miss Barley had heard of Strebling. Was it possible that he had ever wrought harm to some woman, a relative of Ross'? The name must belong to the family. Yet no; she was a mere pauper, a fishwoman, he remembered.

But the idea stung and annoyed him; the more as there was no possible solution of the riddle.

He went away soon afterward, listening with forced smiles to Friend Blanchard's sallies, and inwardly cursing his delay. Why had he not spoken the few words which would have given him the right to call her his? As it was she sat bending over a great blurred sheet of foolscap, scarcely touching his hand with her cold fingers when he said good-by.

When he was gone, Ross went to her own chamber, and laying

"Thou knowest I have need of t

the letter down, knelt by the window to watch him going down the road; she pushed her hair back. What did it matter if it never curled again? What did it matter now, how soon her flesh dried and wrinkled, and old age and death came? She was not like other women, and their lot was not hers. Home, husband, child, she had dreamed of them all, as all young girls do. They could live down obstacles to their love, but a shameful birth, a beggarly childhood, these never could be undone.

She knelt there, her hands stretched vaguely out over the window sill, a long time, while the snow whitened the fields and the road on which he had disappeared; knelt there till the night came silently down.

Many years ago, in that shameful childhood, old Joe had taught her to kneel by this very window when she said her evening prayer. "Seems like as ef He was nearer out o' doors," he said. She had an odd faith in the Helper who was so real to Joe, then, and now when she saw Him under every beautiful work, or deed, or true word in the world, her faith was just as childish. She never had tasted a pleasure, in her friends, in the good she had done, in her own beauty, or in hard-accomplished work, that she had not thanked Him for it, and, perhaps, asked for more. If it had been her grandfather, or her child (if she had had one) who lay dying to-night, she would have asked his life, and known it would be granted. But it was her own womanly life that was being stifled, her right to love and be loved, and if she held out her hands and soul to the SomeThing which waited behind that solemn night, crying, "Thou knowest I have need of these things," who blames her?

Friend Blanchard, anxiously listening at her door, a long time after, heard no sound; but in a little while Ross rose from where she sat, pale and wet in the frosty air, with light in her eyes, and a smile on her lips, having given her trouble to Another to care for.

She made up a cheery fire, and undressed and crept into bed, going to sleep as easily as when old Joe used to rock her in his arms. It seemed to her that no matter how stormy the days coming might be, he and his little girl and the stranger who had come into their lives and who was already so dear to her, would be led together safely through their journey to the home waiting for them. She had asked for it, and it would be done. So, dreaming of that journey, she fell asleep, and through her sleeping as her waking dreams, the bells of her childhood rang cheerful, prophetic music.

prove whether they were true men or not. Yet he was the favorite in his mess, enjoyed all their stories two or three times over, and told as racy ones as any of them; yet nobody ever faced old Burley with a lie, or made game of the cause for which he was fighting. There was a trace of this respect and sincerity of manner in the young officers as they talked to him.

"What's your idea, Joe?" said Gaines, as he drew himself up lazily from his blanket, and took down a bottle from the shelf. "Take a drink first; to the health of somebody at home."

"Saddee, Leftenant; that's heartenin'. But I've only one little gal at home, and I never take her name in my mouth with liquor. This was the notion I had," putting down the glass, and looking at Knox. "You know that young fellar as went out to prospect a week ago; up to the forks of the Big Sandy? Markle, by name? Well! I was fond o' Markle. He's never got back; d'ye know?"

"Certainly; Lieutenant Markle; he went out to reconnoitre," a cloud crossing the captain's face. "Well, what of him?"

"A little black-bearded fellar. Well," turning his hat inside out, reflectively, "he's not got back; that's the p'int. I donno what Colonel Garfield thinks, but it's my opinion he's bushwhacked; that's what Markle is—bushwhacked."

The young men exchanged significant glances. Joe interpreted them shrewdly.

"You think so, likewise? Well, I've been turnin' the matter over in my mind, and I've concluded that it's not the clean thing to do not to hunt him up. It's my place to go in search of him—of Markle. I'll likely find him; likely not. He belonged to my company; I wish you'd mention that to the colonel, Capt'n Knox, and that I'm goin' out in these here Secesh clothes to lie round the country a bit in search of him. That is, with the colonel's permit, of course. Though *he's* no more than a college chap, eyther," in a lower voice.

Knox hesitated, looking doubtfully at the lieutenant. "It's a brave thing in you to offer, I know, Burley. These mountain passes are beset with the lowest class of Rebels; the offscourings of Marshall's troops. I don't believe Garfield will allow you to risk it. There would be little chance of your finding him, and we have no men to spare, especially picked men like yourself. Better risk younger hands, if any."

The color rose in Burley's lean jaws. "As for that remark about picked men, I'm obleeged to you, capt'n. But I don't think the colonel 'll object, onless you hint it to him so to do. Young Markle was a fav'rite of his'n. I've made up my mind to go," doggedly, "if you'll git the permit. I liked that little fellar, and besides, if he's got a mother, I'm responsible to her for leavin' his

bones here to be gnawed by the bars in the wilderness. They was hardly a man's bones yet; he wasn't but a boy."

"There are boys enough of us to go in search of him," said Gaines, hastily. "It is enough for you to risk your white head for your country, Mr. Burley, without making it an unnecessary target for these cursed sharp-shooters. On Markle's account, too. He was a pop-gun sort of a fellow, after all," in a lower tone, crossing and uncrossing his legs uneasily as he stood.

Joe looked at him steadily. "He didn't seem that to me, sir Young fellars is generally raw and frothy like; the army's too much filled up with them. I had to come clear out West to get sworn in at all; but ther bein' so few men of my age in the army, makes me more responsible. I'll look after the boy."

Knox, after a moment's hesitation, had left the tent; but Gaines stood looking out over the wide waste of snow and darkness to the hazy, spectral mountain line. "Yonder is the route he took," he said impatiently, pointing with his hand across through the gorge leading to the Rebel intrenchments on the head-waters of the Big Sandy. "It will be throwing your life away to follow him, and so I tell you, Burley."

"As for givin' your life away for your country or your friend," said Joe, deliberately, "I don't think ther's much difference at bottom. So the Good Man said; and He did it, too."

Gaines remained silent, whistling a low tune, as he stood in the door of the tent. Joe waited half an hour inside. "I'm afeard the capt'n hes some trouble about that furlough," he said at last. "I wish Colonel Garfield and me was acquainted, and ther'd be no difficulty. But he hardly knows which of his men's of the right kidney, I expect. I'll go put my traps together, ef you'll let me apast, Leftenant."

Gaines moved aside. "You make sure of going?"

"Yes, sir. It's borne in on me, somehow, that I'll go. I'll be back in a bit," putting on his overcoat to conceal his suit of butternut, and pulling his comforter about his ears as he crossed the open space to where his company (one of an Ohio regiment) had their quarters. Two or three men were lounging on the ground about the smouldering fire when he went in; the tent was dirty; the straw on the ground muddy; their clothes and blankets in a disordered heap; the men were as yet too unused to camp-life to have learned the advantages of order. The old man stumbled over their legs, as he made his way to the corner where his knapsack hung; and taking it down, began to pack it as if for a march.

"You're not on picket to-night, Joe?" asked one of the men, leaning on his elbow.

"No." He looked back over his shoulder, now and then at them,

and then out at the wide, gloomy night settling deeper and darker over the mountains. The tent was a cheerful shelter, after all; he came to the fire, and spread out his hands over it. Joe was an old man now, with habits grown stiff as his limbs: habits which, since his youth, had been curiously methodical and clean; at home, for years, he had gone daily from his neat chamber in the farm-house to his neater little office in the lumber-yard. It came up before him suddenly now, distinct as a picture: the white walls, the big wooden chair, the green-covered desk, the fire in the grate, and the clean pine scent from the boards coming in at the open window. Rosslyn, when she was in town, would come in always for a few minutes' talk; no one else, perhaps, all day, for customers were few. He had settled down there, in these gentle, easy-going ways, for life. This tent, with its cold and discomfort, the chances of blood and sudden death in wait just without, seemed to him, sometimes, like a horrible nightmare. He listened now, silently, for a while, to the boys joking about "picking off Johnny Reb," etc., with his head dropped on his chest.

"Seems to me, George Dunn, that is but a peart and a shaller way of puttin' it," he said at last. "When we fired at that squad of graycoats down on the creek t'other day, seemed as if I could see the home each on them had left behind, the wife, or little children, may be. I ken't laugh at your jokes, Dunn."

"You'd better go home if you're chicken-hearted, Burley," growled Dunn.

"No." The old man's stern face was set, his eyes turned to the darkness without, as if he found there the meaning and aim of an unflinching purpose. "You're only a lad, you don't understand," slowly. "This hyer disease in the country needed bloodlettin'. It don't matter if it was my brother's—let it go. But it's no subjec' for jokes, to me," with a shudder over his powerful frame.

The men were silent; after a little while, Joe looked again carefully through his knapsack before he strapped it on; thinking that he would ask for three days' rations. Perhaps he might not need so much; turning his head to look at the muddy gap in the whitish-gray line of hills where his road lay. But he did not look at it something rose in his throat, and choked him at the thought of his old body lying stiff in the snow of the gorge yonder. He took a little Bible which he carried from his breast pocket, and out from the leaves a photograph of Ross, keeping his back carefully turned to the men as he held it in the light of the lantern. "Maybe I ought to be keerful of myself for the little 'un," he muttered, doubtfully. "But I ken't leave the boy to be gnawed by the bars yander. Rossline 'ud say that. She'd never want to see her grandad comin' home like a mean, oncourageous hound."

He went out of the tent a moment after, taking the lantern with

him, the men noticed, and a book with a white card between the leaves. When he came back the light was out in the lantern, his coat-collar was drawn closely up about his pale face, and the book and card were gone.

"I'll say good-night now, boys," he said, coming up to them. Something in his tone made them look up.

"I'll sleep out, I expect. Keep up a good fire, Jim; 's likely I kin see it; it'll seem cheerin'." He looked from one to the other wistfully as he spoke.

"Good-night, Burley," one or two said, carelessly.

"You'd better hap up warm," said Dunn. "Take my blanket, it's bigger than you'rn. This snow's bad for your rheumatism."

"No, saddee, lad. You don't bear no malice, George, agin' what I said of your jokes? No. I thought not. I've been rough with you young boys, sometimes. But a man's temper gets out of kelter, at my age. I'd like if you'd all overlook them little brashes we've had. Eh?"

The men nodded and laughed, looking after him as his gaunt figure halted in the tent door, and the heavy, earnest face met theirs; his lips moved as if he would have spoken, but changing his mind, he only lifted his finger to his forehead, slowly, giving them the military salute, and went out into the darkness.

A few minutes later and he stood with Knox, in the shadow of his tent.

"Is there nothing more that I can do for you, Burley?" said the young officer. "I brought passes, an order for rations, and put up a flask of my own brandy. Hush, no matter. Are there no letters, or directions you want to leave in case that—that— Life is uncertain with all of us, you know, here, and—"

The old man put out his hand, but did not speak for a moment. When he did, his voice was steady and collected. "Ther's only one person; it's my grandda'ater, Capt'n Knox. I tried to write to her twicet to-day, but I couldn't –I couldn't. Ef I don't come back when my furlough's out, I'd be obleeged ef you'd send her a few words. I've got her address here. Tell her where I went, and why. And what was likely to be the end of it. I'd be glad if you'd tell it to her as gentle as you could, capt'n. She's nothin' but a little gal; a little, tender gal."

"You have a message—your love? or blessing?" in a lowered voice.

"Well, no," hesitating. "Seems as if I couldn't send them to her through a stranger. That's foolish, maybe, but I feel that way. Rossline knows. There's no need of words between her and me. She knows."

"Good-by, Burley, then. I wish we had more such men in the army."

"If I had younger bones, I'd be worth more. Good-by, Captain Knox." The two men shook hands earnestly, the young officer standing afterward to watch the large, dark figure as it slowly crossed the white slopes, until it had disappeared in the hazy distance. Then he went into his tent, and finding himself alone, after a quick, conscious glance around, took out a little gilt-edged Testament from his luggage (quite new and unused), and began to read it. Something in the homely sincerity of the old man had driven his thoughts back to homely and sincere words which had lingered in his memory since boyhood; the words of that Elder Brother who came to show us that a man, born among the dregs of the people, may make his life purer, humbler and manlier than any that the world has known; and who gave that life at last for the help, not of his friend, but his enemy.

Meanwhile, Joe, plodding down the crooked path made by the men through the underbrush, reached the slope below, and struck out across the white stretch southward at an even, steady gait; wrapping his blanket closer about his head and chest to defend himself from the nipping wind. Now and then he turned his back to it, and stopped to look up at the camp-fires, throwing red, low glances of light down the hill; he could distinguish Jim's among the rest. Then he went on, clapping his arms, before and behind as porters do, to keep himself warm, and began to sing his one song, which he had roared when he was a boy, about "Cease, rude Borus, blusterin' railer," not knowing at all that he meant the wind. But his voice died out in his lungs in a cracked treble, even the whistle which he attempted had to be given up; only the resolute thump, thump of his heavy boots in the snow broke the silence.

As he penetrated farther and farther into the darkness, the fires became mere points of ruddy glitter. But they seemed in some way to connect him to safety and Ross. At last, however, the spur of the hill behind which he must pass crossed the road; the old man paused again, looked long and steadily at the red sparks, and then turning his back on them, drew a long, courageous breath and plunged into the wide, homeless night.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE MOUNTAIN PASS.

NARROW pass between two of the low, sharp peaks of the Cumberland mountains. From their heights, on a Summer morning, it is a purely American landscape that opens; stretches of succulent, arable land, in broad, green slopes, lonely, unused; mountains unmined and untunnelled, their treasures close hid under jealous, heavy forests, rising solitary and at long intervals, left there to dream with the whitish mist clinging to them, as if the moonlight and they, forgotten, had slept into the common day together; muddy roads, creeping through cuts in the hills, their banked sides of gray sandstone, oozing and wet, stained red with iron; yellow creeks coiling, filled with life, through rocky, mountain gullies, through dusky maple woods, through orchards and wide, half-tilled farms; the smoke of iron-furnace fires off to the north, blown in purple and saffron dots across the sky; perpetual sounds coming up to these heights, of far-off voices, of lowing cattle, the bee's drone, the sobbing, under-ground hill springs making their way down to the quiet valleys, the hush of listening forests; that inarticulate voice of a Summer day, far and dim, near akin to silence, with meaning that always calls to us, yet never reaches the ear of our ear, wait we ever so patiently.

To a traveller of clear instincts, looking from these heights, there would come, on a Summer day, the certainty that he stood on ground belonging to a new world; a sense of untested strength, of waiting space and nourishment for homes; of beauty, rank in its vigor; and above all that uneasy, unanchored explorer's feeling, everywhere epidemic in the raw, restless air of the States, the sense that the present foothold was but a promise; that over the river, over the mountain, just beyond the eye's range, lay the land of his desire. The very air itself blew outward eagerly, the streams

crept out—out under the far violet-tinted horizon to a wider, better country, to which that violet line formed the intangible and only barrier.

But old Joe Burley found another meaning in the pass and long, sharp-edged mountains fencing it in, as he entered it near the close of a long Winter's night. A rainy night, sodden and heavy; it blotted out utterly the sweeps of mountain ranges, farms and forests, and drew in the horizon for the old man to the gray walls of rock that opened on either side a murky gap for him to pass through.

For three days he had been tramping through these slopes of moorland, these hill defiles and listening forests, which opened so fair and prophetic a scroll to the Summer sun. Whatever meaning they bore now, found utterance in the charred farm-houses which he passed, in the groups of dirty, white tents that were clustered here and there on the creek banks, in the nameless graves that scarred the fields. Beyond that, there was silence.

The old man had plodded on from one mountain range to another, falling in with bushwhackers, with outlying Federal scouts, with gangs of men ready to plunder on either side; he had cut loose all ties behind him, and held his life ready for the moment's call. Shrewdly enough, he had assumed a character which required no acting for him to sustain—that of a mule-breeder, who had sold his stock to Humphrey Marshall, and was making his way home again to Letcher County. His rations were gone; he dragged his heavy, rheumatic old legs, in their leather leggings, up the rocks like a burden; he believed that they found in every icy pool or clammy clay-bog in which they sank, a new and keener pain.

He had traced Markle successfully to this gap in the mountains. The young man had reached it three days before. Outside of it, on one side, lay encamped a body of cavalry, an outpost of Marshall's forces, which then were moving up toward the hills on Middle Creek, below Prestonburg; on the other side, the mountain sloped down into the river, a bed at its base of miry clay more impregnable than the human rampart to the assault of the dare-devil, reconnoitreing little Lieutenant. Burley, assuming that he was in the gap, had penetrated to its further end, and found there, just as night closed on him, an unfordable stream.

Rain began to fall; he was baffled at every turn; he found shelter under a projecting rock, and tried to sleep until morning. When the darkness began to grow colder and less dense, he got up, buckling his leather strap tighter about his stomach to stifle the pain, stamped, and coughed, and lit his pipe, bracing himself up for the day's work, and then turned his face sturdily to the dreary gorge again, trying to understand that he was Joseph Burley, lumberman, and that this slough of night and peril was the old, hearty, friendly world whose tricks he thought he had learned in sixty years.

Perhaps Joe's insight was not so clear as that of the traveller on the Summer's morning, or perhaps (for he was a dull, superstitious lout in his youngest day) his instincts were only keen enough to discover the passing, transient phase of meaning on the face of the country that had given him birth. For, as he entered the gap, no prophecy of waiting homes or a nation's glory came to him, but a curious conviction, instead, that he was going to meet the end of some miserable tragedy, the consummation of a crime that cried aloud to God or to man for redress.

The feeling was the stronger in the old man's mind, because there was no outward storm or turbulence in the coming day; the disquiet in the air was that of a dull despair rather than that discontent which could find vent in ordinary tempest or outcry; even the solemn gloom of the mountain peaks was lowered and made common in the foggy, breathless morning; colorless and torpid as the face of a dead man with whom remains neither anger nor hope, whose eyes are shut, whose lips are bound, knowing that the verdict had been recorded and the Book forever closed.

The white snow had melted in the pass and lay in miserable, rotting heaps of slush; there was not a gust of frosty, clean wind to tell of the wholesome Winter's nights gone before; the stars, which have looked down, with their calm gospel of good-will and forgiveness, on many a fiercer victory of human wrath and injustice than that old murder of helpless Abel, had gone out of these muddied skies; only the clammy clay, clogging his feet, holding him back; the dull, monotonous rain filling the world as with a perpetual, uncomforted sorrow, and the gray, rocky cliffs, opening before him.

It was natural that Burley, who was a soldier, and fighting for an idea, should refer all individual impressions to that one great cause. He entered the gorge, with a sort of dogged certainty, expecting to find Markle's dead body in the crevices of the impending rocks. "It seemed to me," he said afterward, "that them gaping stone walls was like a tomb, and that he would be found there, lyin', like Lazarus, bound hand and foot. There was a cry in the very air that mornin'. I seemed, too, to begin to see ther', as the night broke and the gray dawn set in, how the great and terrible day of the Lord, prophets talked of, was upon us: when the young and strong men offered themselves a willin' sacrifice. The mornin' had nyther help nor comfort in it. I could hear my brother's blood callin' from the ground agin them that slayed him. I could hear the voice of one in the wilderness, cryin' for her children, like one who would not be comforted, because they were not."

In which poor Burley stumbled blindly on a truth deeper than all facts. For that great and awful Presence, that Comforter who was to come, who struggles to touch us in the living sunlight or in the healing wind, who gropes vaguely up through wayside dust, or

fluttering leaf, who calls aloud to us in the wailing sea, who wraps us at last in the warm mould, the thing which philosophers familiarize as Nature, and for whose human tenderness and strength men can find no other name than that of Mother, does so mourn for its maimed children, does so rejoice with those who inherit their birthright, that the terrible pathos of its voice grows sometimes audible to natures more obtuse than that of this old man. Yet, it was natural to him, if any mysterious echo of meaning reached him through the silent, unlit dawn, or clammy air, to fancy that the dirge belonged to the young, brave hero, dead on the field of battle, rather than to some life lost, with its battles unwon, unfought.

Keeping his head down on his chest, his eyes glancing furtively from side to side, he pushed up the ravine, the uncertain light beginning to make the clefts along the rocks visible through the low-lying, sluggish fog.

No dead body met his eye.

On the further side of the gully, he had noticed, the day before, the remains of an old hut, built against the side of the hill, the door of which swung by one hinge in the wind, giving a full view of broken boards and muddy floor inside.

Coming near to it now, however, Joe perceived, dimly, the figure of a man in the doorway, with one arm thrown up over his head, covered with a ragged red flannel shirt-sleeve. Burley hailed him, but received no answer; the figure disappearing so suddenly that he almost believed it a deception of the fog. He paused a moment, uncertainly, then crossing to the other side of the gorge, hurried on.

How far he walked he did not know; probably not out of the man's sight, or perhaps the other followed him stealthily. But all the weakness, and hunger, and disappointment against which he had fought for days, seemed to assault poor Joe's old body and brain in one moment. His pipe went out and dropped from his mouth, his knees tottered, his teeth chattered helplessly, he stood with his feet glued in the muddy slime, stretching out his arms.

"Tut! tut! Rossline ud think her grandad was made of poor stuff!" he muttered, with a laugh, which went down into a miserable chuckle, tugging vainly at his feet.

A pair of strong hands caught him under the arm-pits and eased him out of the slough. But Joe's eyes were dim. "I'm obleeged to you, comrad. I'm obleeged to you. These legs of mine is a dead lift to-day."

After that he was only conscious enough to know that he was slowly helped along for some distance, and then, that there was a sudden change in the temperature, the air about him being warm and dry, and that he was seated with a glass of liquor to his lips. When he opened his eyes he found himself in the hut with his back to the wall. The roof was barely high enough for a man to stand

upright in; the ground was covered with dried wisps of hay. His legs were bared to the knees, and a man was squatted on the ground in front of him rubbing them vigorously. Burley tried feebly to draw them away.

"No, sir, no; I kent allow that."

The man sopped a rag he had from the bottle of whiskey, spilling it over the floor, and began to polish away more vehemently than before, with a cordial, eager laugh, curiously out of keeping with the place. The more Joe rebelled, the more he polished, and sopped, and chuckled.

"Enough o' that, comrad, I tell you. Them old trotters is nigh done for," looking down with a covert admiration at the big brawny muscles under the chilled, purple skin. "I thought them nags ud hold me my time; but they've had their day. They've had their day. Your'e throwin' the good liquor away, man!"

The man dashed it out with a bravado of generosity, like one who would be a spendthrift in a paltry way, if he dared, and after a final rub, drew out of an inner pocket a patched pair of woollen socks and put them on Burley's feet; keeping his head, as he did it, persistently bent so as almost to conceal his face. Joe perceived, however, from the shirt that he wore, that it was the man whom he had passed on the road. He could see also that he was small, dressed in trousers and waistcoat of stained broadcloth, made to fit a much larger person; his hair was iron-gray and cut short; about the top of the head, bald, the forehead broad and protuberant, the hands horny and large-knuckled. Dangling from his ears, and on one finger, were gaudy rings set with red glass stones.

Joe's tone, when he saw these, became more assured and kindly; but he did not call him "comrad" again.

"Kin you spare your rations, my man?" when he found the other was bringing out some corn-bread and slices of pork from an inner cranny of the hovel. "I've got money enough for us both, but it's been slack lines with me in the way of feedin' for two days now."

The man nodded, still preserving his forced silence, and placed the food before him, spreading out a clean towel, in which it had been wrapped by way of a napkin, and then turned away, looking down the road, laughing secretly to himself when he heard the old man munching eagerly. Meanwhile Joe scanned him anxiously. He was a middle-aged man, "an' breakin' fast," Burley perceived. Beside the heavy forehead, there was little to note in his small, clean-shaven face beyond the reticent, slow-moving, melancholy eyes. The mouth was weak, the chin retreating.

"That old fellar hes black blood in him," thought Burley, perplexed. "Ef he knows wher' Markle's to be found, he'll never give him up to me with these secesh clothes on." For he had found

the negroes along his route invariably distrustful of his errand and disguise. He began his soundings cautiously.

"Yer a native hereabouts, my man, eh?"

The man turned quickly, raising his hand to his head mechanically. "I'm de dining-room servant of Colonel Wilder. His house is jess beyond dat farder hill. My name's George. George Wilder, cunnel's folks call me," the words slipping off his tongue like a parrot's chatter; then he fell again into his watchful silence, keeping one eye on the road and the other on Burley. Joe put down his chunk of corn-bread, looking at him with a baffled stare. He could not tell the man whose food he had just eaten that he was lying.

"But ther's none of his sort that won't try to outwit a white man," he thought. "The poor critters is druv to it; and this man hes a purpose in it."

Now, too, that the temporary weakness was overcome by rest and food, and Burley began to draw strong, hearty breaths again, the old consciousness of the intangible foreboding of ill about him returned. The hut in which he sat, comfortably enough, was dark; the broken entrance made a frame for the incessant, cruel rain and cheerless twilight without; the man in the doorway, with his limp, stooped body, and that furtive, hunted look turned down into the road, was a fitting figure to give meaning to the day. The momentary, childish pleasure of rescuing Burley, of rubbing and feeding him, had died away; when he was conscious of the old man's scrutiny he shuffled uneasily. There was, indeed, this peculiarity about the man, old as he was, that his limbs fell when not used into aimless, unpurposed movement, as if the members of his body had not even the one common, informing motive of life which gives to an animal its calm, steady composure of motion, but were to be used at the will of another. The very eye which should have discovered his separate identity, with all of its reticence and melancholy, had yet that conscious, irresolute look of a child or idiot, who knows itself a parasite, and dependent on a more adult nature.

Burley, however, saw nothing of this. A certain familiarity with the man's figure and face puzzled and irritated him. "It's the same, and not the same as some other I've seen," he thought. Then, going up to him, he touched him on the shoulder. "There's some one comin' up the hill as you're afeard on?" he said.

The man shifted his position suddenly, but looked Burley straight in the eyes. "No; what for ud I watch? I am Cunnel Wilder's man. My name's George."

"True, true!" Burley leaned one arm against the jamb of the door, looking down at him. "Ef I let him alone he'll leak out all his secrets," he said to himself; but he kept his eye steadily on him, as he would hold his hand on the lock of a door that he meant to open. He was not mistaken.

"You comed up from beyond Cunnel Wilder's, suh?" the man asked at last.

"Yes."

"I've not been dar dese seberal days," hesitating. "I went down to Jennie's creek for de cunnel. Its prob'le you could tell me some ob de news dar, now."

"What news?" Joe fumbled at his cravat carelessly, knowing that some hint of the truth would speedily appear. The man's jaw fell, he coughed huskily, but said, finally, distinctly,

"Dar was some strangers dar. Dey come from Pulaski County, de day I lef. You don't know if dey's gone, suh?"

"Who were they?"

"Dar was Mist Laurar Page. An dere was de gemman from Alabama, an he's son, out um Zollicoffer's army."

Some old remembrance made Burley stand erect, throwing back his powerful shoulders. "Alabama?" he said.

"Yes, suh. M's Jeems Strebling an' he's son. Maje Robert, dat ar. You don't know if dey's gone out um dar?"

"No." Burley said no more, though his lips moved. What the mulatto's keen instinct could read in his face he did not consider, until, happening to look down at his feet, where the man sat crouching on the door-step, he found him peering eagerly up, with his lips apart. When he caught Joe's eye he laughed, pressing his palms softly together.

"I tink, suh, y' knowed M's Jeems. I su'mise dat he was no friend of yours."

Joe drew his fingers through his gray beard again and again, his eye contracted, while he kept his face set toward the dull twilight, as if he heard some voice beyond the mulatto's challenging him to plead guilty or not guilty. He was saying certain words over to himself, how that twenty-odd years were gone; how that, after all, men like Strebling were not to be hated for the ill they did, more than any noxious vermin; how that the Good Man had been very near to old Joe Burley these many years, and was he to bring back his soul to Him at last with this black drop in it? With that the black drop rose, and dyed his face purple, and thickened his tongue.

"I'd rather not talk of Jeems Strebling. I think, after all, I'll not die till that score's clean between him and me."

The man got up suddenly, some vehement emotion making his whole body rigid. "Why, you're white!" he said. "What kin ole M's do to you?"

Joe turned quickly. "You are his slave, then?"

The man put out both hands, looking Joe in the face, silent for a moment; then they fell. "You're too keen-eyed for me, M's," he said. "Yes, I am dat."

Burley did not speak. The mulatto stood looking out into the rain, some thought, which Joe could not fathom, in his eyes.

"I allers say dat ar," he said, quietly, "slave. Some of our people name demselves cullored men an' suvants; but I tell em dat name b'longs to seeh as own demselves. I b'long to M's Jeems Strebling. Cunnel Wilder once he offered him his bay mare for me, but M's said I was wuth more to him. If de filly had been trowed in, it would hev fetched me. I b'long to dat ar Jeems Strebling. All dat's of me is wuth just dat bay mare an' her filly."

If there was any irony in this, it did not reach Joe's brain. "Look here, my man," he said, after a moment's pause, laying one brawny hand on the little man's shoulder, and turning him about in front of his dogged, ox like face. "It's no concern of mine who you are. You was hospittable to me, and I wormed yer secret out, and it was an underhand sort of thing to do. Now, in return, I'm going to trust you. These clothes don't belong to me. I come out of a government regiment a bit off among the hills. I'm in sarch of a little fellar that I think is likely bushwhacked. He's a blue-coat—a Yankee; you understand?"

"Yes, suh, I understand."

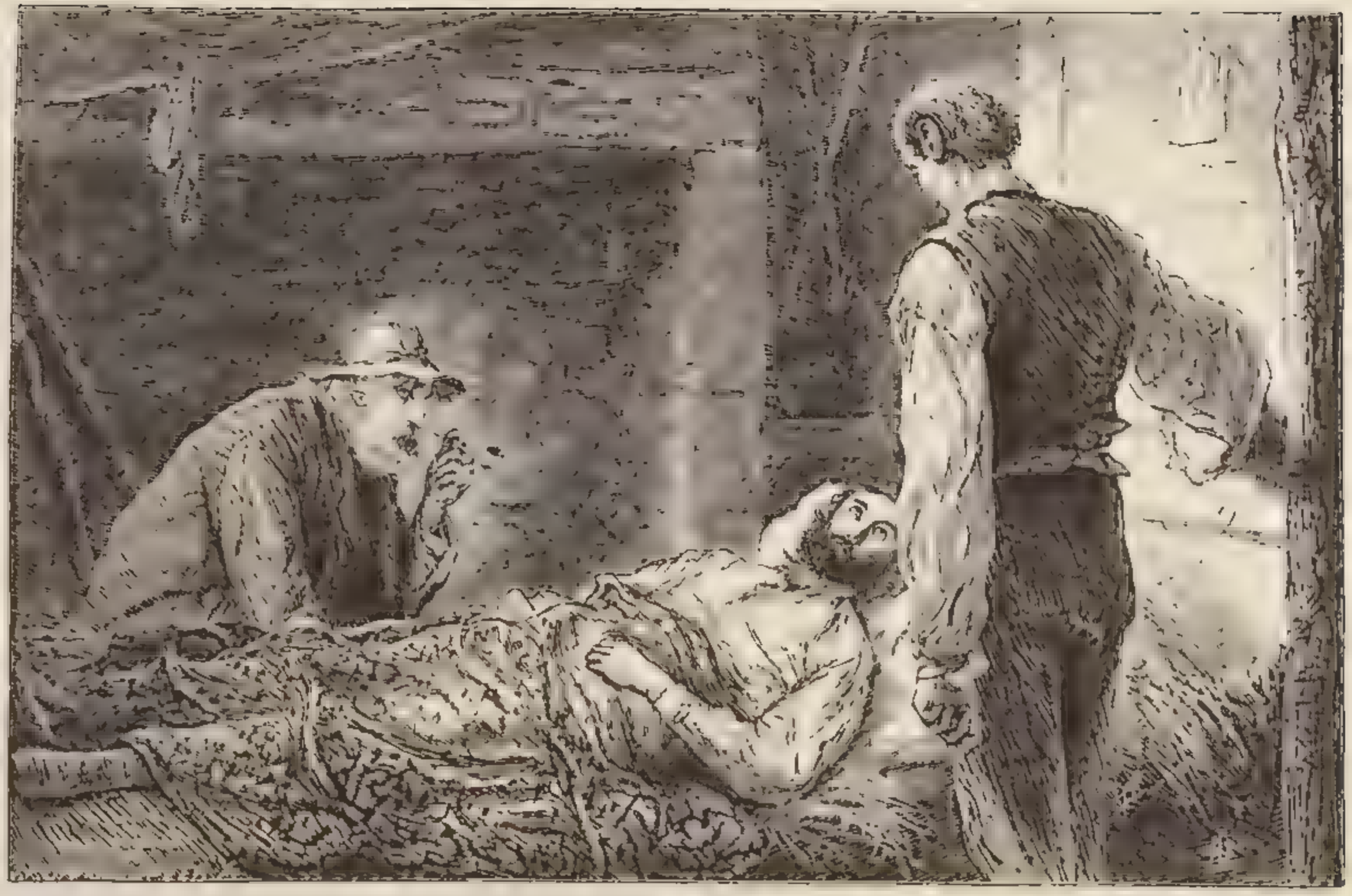
Hitherto the mulatto had followed Burley's meaning with greedy avidity; but at the first mention of the missing man there was a quick flash of intelligence in his face, and then it lapsed into the dullest stolidity. He stooped indifferently to tie his shoe. Joe went on, raising his voice,

"I'm one of them Federal soldiers yer master's fightin' ag'inst. You've got my life in your hands now, you see. But I thought you'd likely heerd of Markle dodgin' about these hills. I lost traces of him in this gap. He's a little black-eyed chap, with his face covered with hair."

The man's fingers shook a little as he tied the leather string before answering. "Before de Lo'd, suh, I neber seed de man."

A sound, like a billet of wood thrown against the inner door, was followed by a storm of shouts and oaths. "This way, Burley, this way! Nat, you devil, you'll die lying, though the truth would serve you better! Here, Burley!"

Joe's plunge into the back room and guffaw when he reached it shook the shed. Markle was lying, in his shirt and trousers, on a pallet of straw, near a low, smouldering fire. "Do you mean that you came in search of me, Joe? There's a chunk of log, that's all the seat we have; sit down, old fellow, sit down. Yes, I was nearly done for; here's where the bullet went in. But, I'll be up to-morrow, Nathan says. How far will I have to walk? Where did you leave the boys? Do you know that fellow saved my life? That Nat. The cursedest liar! But he found me two days ago, in the jimson weeds, there at the end of the gully: one of Marshall's



"You 've not once said by your looks dat you was white and I was black."—*Chap.* 18.

scouts winged me an hour before. I've the bullet here in my pocket. Nat found it."

"Slow, Leftenant, slow! You're losin' breath," laughed Joe.

They both laughed a little more than was necessary; Markle catching his breath with a hysteric sob, slapping his hand once and again on Joe's great paw where it lay on the bed.

"Why, Joe, three days ago, I made up my mind the game was up! I never looked to see old Dubuque or the boys again. It seemed as if they all come back to me when your old face showed in that door! But I wanted to tell you about Nat. Here, Nathan!" rapping on the floor with a stick.

The door opened and the man entered. He looked deprecatingly at Burley. "Beg pardon for deceibin' of you, suh, but I didn't know whether you was a friend of M's Markle's or no."

"Well, now, you told me your own secret?" said Joe.

The man rubbed his bald crown doubtfully: "So I did, sah, so I did. I neber could keep my mind to myself, not since I was a boy. But about M's Markle, here," busying himself with the bed-clothes, "dat was a matter of honor, dat minded my tongue to keep quiet."

"I wanted to tell you, Burley, before Nathan, what he has done for me," said Markle, holding the man's arm by the sleeve. "For three days he has waited here to nurse me, within gunshot range of his master, liable to detection any moment. He was escaping when he found me. He was a total stranger to me—a total stranger."

"Shell I tell you why I done dat?" said Nathan, looking up quickly. "In dese tree days, M's Markle, you've not said once by your looks dat you was white and I was black."

"Bah! What's the skin? That prejudice will vanish like the one our Salem grandfathers had against old women. The world moves—it moves! And you came in search of me, Burley?" dragging himself up on one elbow energetically. "Well, people say the world is selfish, and given up to trade. By the Lord, when I think of Nat and you, here, risking your lives for such a useless cub as I've been— And there's deeds like that done every day in this war. Talk of your old chivalry and brotherhood—"

"I never heerd about that chivalry," said Joe, slowly, spitting reflectively, after a furtive glance at the mulatto's eager face. "But, seems to me it's a helpful time in the world. Ther's thousands of young men gone into this war to give Nathan here, and his kin, the chance of bein' men, and not property, wuth the vally of a horse. Ef you knew, Nathan," said Joe, with the patronage which black blood always brought into his manner, yet speaking directly to a hungry something that looked out of the man's eyes into his own, "ef you and your kin knew the price that's bein' paid for your

chance, in the best blood of the country, you'd use it when it came."

Markle's irascible face grew a shade paler. "Joe," he said, slowly, "If I were Nathan, or one of his race, I would say the price ought to be paid. I would enter into no abasement of gratitude. What if the best blood of the country does flow to give him his chance? It is late in the day. My God! Look at him!"

Even to Joe's slow brain his meaning was clear. Something in Nathan's figure, as he stood by the wall, bending humbly, his hands clasped behind him, gave Barley a perception of the wrong done to him and his people, which no slave's branded hand or scarred back had ever done before. He took out his pipe restlessly, and filled it, wondering, uneasily, why God made men niggers, after all. Being made, it was, maybe, better if they'd put up with their lot.

Markle's wiry voice sounded like a woman's when he spoke again. "If I did not say to you that you were black since we were together, there has not been an hour in which I forgot it. Why, you're a middle-aged man, Nathan. More than half of his life is over, Burley. Look at his face; there is unused brain-power there which God never gave to you or me. Look at the hunger, the vacuity, the animal passion, which has taken its place. Why, the man was born with the ambition, and, most likely, the blood of the best of their Southern families in his veins, and to satisfy it, he has had for work a stable to clean for forty years, and for his highest pleasure an extra dish of something to eat. The play's nearly over for him now; he is wifeless, homeless, with neither a name nor a country to call his own. Just Nathan, nothing more. It is late in the day to bring him, and the gray haired thousands like him, 'their chance.'"

Nathan stood up, unbuttoning his waistcoat as if for breath. "Do you think it's too late, suh?"

"Do you?" keenly.

The man turned, looking out through the mist and rain toward the house where was his master. It was as if all the weight laid on his brain and soul during his own long life, all the apathy which had descended to him from three generations gone before of hopeless servitude, pressed on him with that back-turned look. It was too late; the old gnawing hunger to know, to be, which had tortured his earlier manhood, annoyed, irritated him now. There were but a few more years to tote the weary load. Why, if he could reach the North, should he not be content to sit down and eat white bread, drink whiskey and take his fill of ease every day? He had come to regard these things as pleasant. He could wear finer clothes than Major Bob—why not be satisfied with these?

He stepped forward, leaning with his knuckles on the foot of the

bed, the veins in his bony neck swollen, gray shadows on his thin face.

"I reckon it's too late, suh," he said. "I don't know as the chance u l make anything now but a brute of me. It might hev been different once," and then, picking up a water-pail, he went out abruptly into the rain.

"It's a damned shame," said Joe, thoughtfully, stubbing his finger nto his pipe. But Markle's little bearded face was staring fiercely at the floor over the edge of the pallet, and he made no answer.

"Somehow, it ain't clear to me how it's to be bettered," with a ponderous sigh. "Ef they want to be free, all right. But as for bein' equal to us white folks, that goes agin my grain. Why, they're niggers. Ye can't go back o' that. Niggers," taking off his white felt hat and laying it solemnly down between his knees like an argument closed.

"Burley," said the lieutenant, drawing himself up on the bed with a long breath, "how far off is Garfield? I can't lie stifling here any longer. What if we made the first break in the journey to-night?"

"Well, Leftenant, I'm willin'. But about that ar leg? An' how are we to cross the country? You ken't pass for another mule raiser. Seems to me as if we wos shut up here like rats in a hole."

Markle struggled up until he sat upright. "If I only knew where we were?" he said, anxiously.

"Well, ther's no troops nigh us. All we've got to fear in this vally is the outlyin' bushwhackers an' the natives; but it might be old John Bunyan's vally, for that matter, with them; they're equal to any of Apollyon's quags and pits, and gins. Fact is," cleaning his pipe and putting it in his pocket, "bein' there's two of us, we're in a trap that it passes my gumpshion to get out of. I'll kerry you pick-a-back, Leftenant, but you'll have to do the head work."

"There are three of us."

"Nat?"

"That is my plan for him."

Nathan, who had come in while they talked, and was stooping over the fire, turned at this, and came to the foot of the pallet. "I tank you, marster," he said, enunciating the syllables slowly. "Ef you help me to my freedom I'll -I'll do my best," putting his hand on his bald crown and letting it rest there.

"You saved my life, comrade," said Markle, cheerily. "I'd hardly fling you off like a crutch that I had broken."

"No, suh, you'd not. But dere's one fact," stooping over and lowering his voice, "which this gentlem is wrong in, if he'll allow me. Dare's troops closen in on us dis bery night on both sides; de blues on one, and de grays on de oder."

"How do you know?" demanded Joe.

"De slaves round hyur come to me at nights; dey's impatient to git me off, see? Dey always knows, whisperin' de news one to anoder."

Joe was disposed to challenge him further, but Markle leaned forward eagerly. "Where are Humphrey Marshall's men?"

"I'll show you, suh," with a prompt, business-like air that he had not shown before, picking up a bit of coal from the hearth and rapidly drawing a rough map of the country on the wall. "Hyur's Middle Creek, which runs jes outside this gully, an' hyur's Prestonburg, on its banks; you kin see the smoke from it on a clear day jes beyond dat hill," pointing out of the door. "M's Humphrey Marshall's encamped between us an' Prestonburg; his tents is huddled in between two mountains."

"How far from us?" said Markle.

"'Bout a mile an' a half, suh. We are a'most widin his picket lines."

Markle looked at Joe. "You did not tell me this, Nathan?"

"Why shud I trubble you, to no use, suh? I was layin' plans for 'scape. I wasn't idle one minit, marster. Ten miles below us, on Middle Creek, is Cunnel Garfield's forces—"

"Garfield! I left him three days ago. He had no thought of moving," interrupted Burley, angrily.

"It is two days since he took up dat place on Middle Creek," said Nathan, scoring the spot energetically with his coal.

For a few moments there was no sound in the shed but the dropping of the rain without. "Ef that ther's true," said Joe, half under his breath, "ther's no chance for us. For three men to cross this country onbeknown, with Marshall's cavalry gallopin' lither and yon like devils, is a sheer onpossibility. I've said my say."

"What was your plan, Nathan?" Markle said, forcing his leg down on the floor to test its strength.

"De plan I an' my people hyur about thought on, suh, was not to cross de country, but go by water. One of Cunnel Wilder's men, suh, 'll bring a skiff under de rocks t' de end of de gully, tonight, 'n our chance is, ef 't holds dark, t' drop down before mornin', keepin' in shore."

"And a very good chance it is!" said Markle, heartily. "Hurra for the old tent again! Give me my coat and shoes, Nat," beginning to whistle as he tried to work them on.

"What hour had we better set out?" asked Burley.

"Not before midnight, M's. De moon rises about then. We'll have plenty of time to row down before dawn." The mulatto was silent after that, stood drawing uncertain lines over the wall, looking back furtively, now and then, at the two white men.

"What is it, Nat?" Markle asked, at last, kindly.

Nathan came hastily toward them, then stopped short, passing

his hand over his thin jaws; the words choking in his mouth twice as he tried to utter them. "Ef we reach de Guvernent camp—will I be free den, suh?"

"Yes."

"God willin', you'll be a free man before mornin', Nat," growled out Joe, looking after him with compassionate eyes as he went into the outer room, taking, as was his wont, his joy or his pain away into some solitary corner.

"Are you willing to trust Nathan and his plan?" asked Markle, anxiously. "I have no right to venture your life on my faith in him."

"Nat's all right," said Joe, with the cough of a judge. "I've had a long 'xperience of them niggers. They're very good at fancy lyin', but they're l'yal at heart, provided you treat em as men."

The day passed slowly: the rain, fortunately, growing heavier. The white men remained in the back room of the shed, Joe telling long stories belonging to his wagoning days, and Markle laughing and dozing over them. But the bald-headed little man, who had a stake in the day greater than life or death, went about with a pinched, contracted face, his motions as unsteady as if he had been drinking. He kept the outer door ajar, to confirm the uninhabited appearance of the shed, and stood behind it, looking through a knot hole down the road. Once or twice Markle hobbled in to speak a cheery word to him. The last time, late in the afternoon, Nathan looked up at him with a nervous laugh. "Dem rain-drops is tollin' off de hours, suh; dey'll be down to minutes soon."

"You have looked forward to freedom a long while?" Markle said, putting his hand on the man's shoulder.

"Since I was a boy, suh. Most of us do dat."

"Was Strebling so hard a master?"

"He wur a very good marster; dar wur enuff to eat an' to wear; this is an old suit of Maje Bob's I've got on now. We old men never wur lashed by ole M's, dough it wur defferent wid M's Bob; he laid it on heavy when he wur out o' sorts. But I've no complaint to make of de ole plantation. Mebbe I'll fare worse in de Norf, in de way ob eatin' or clo's—I dunno."

"Why, then—"

"It's de chance!" he broke in, with a husky whisper. "Gor a mighty! it's de chance!" The peculiar feature in this man which had interested Markle was, that, as his secret self became visible, he grew quieter, his intonations slow, his manner grave. There was the magnetism in him of repressed force: power of which he himself was scarcely cognizant; he impressed the lieutenant curiously, as no other man, white or black, had ever done.

"The chance to be, what?" he said, probing him.

Nathan looked steadily out into the falling rain. "Sometimes I tink nothin' but dis brute dat I am," passing his hand with a swift motion over his face. "Other times" and then was silent. Markle stood by with a sense of powerlessness new to him. His life long, he had worked with or fought his equals: a boy, or at college, or in camp, life had been but a gay, eager keeping-step with comrades; but here was a call for strength outside of his world: a man sinking into a slough which would be death to body and soul, and he inefficient on the brink.

"Ther's bin times dar in de stable," said Nathan, in his even, controlled voice, "when I've bin groomin' de horses, or polishin' de harness, an' tinkin', tinkin', of my people, downtrodden, wid de feet ob all nations on dem, and of de good Lord Jesus up yonder, with his hands stretched out to loosen de bands of de captive and let de oppressed go free, and of de hard faces of de white men dat stand between Him an' us, till dere wur a cry 'ud come into my heart which de good God himself would have stopped to hear."

"What cry?"

The man's eyes turned on him with the unutterable need of one drowning in sight of land. "How kin I say? Suh, I'm dumb. I've no words but dem of de stable or de kitchen."

Markle did not answer, turned his head, and looked out into the sobbing rain to avoid the wistful eyes of the old man, which were growing full of tears as they followed his face. "Suh, we've bin kept ign'rant so dat we might be dumb. We can't speak words dat de white folks 'ud listen to. We can't write 'em. If you wrote 'Nathan' dar on de wall, I wouldn't know it. How kin we stan' up and tell dis great nation de meanin' of the cry in our hearts? How dat we wants de chance to use de souls dat de good Lord gived us? How dat we's tired of bein' counted as beasts, wid no better work or pleasure dan beasts? De white folks' hearts must teach 'em what we wants. We'se not got de words."

"As for slavery, that's dead," said Markle, emphatically. "That first gun at Sumter sounded its knell, thank God! Frémont has recognized that truth."

"I tink dat's true, suh," slowly. "Mos' of our people tink slavery's nigh done; dey's quick to b'leave dat; dey's looked for deliv'rance so long. But dat's on'y de beginnin'. Dat was a great wrong de white folks did to us. How's dey goin' to make it up to us?"

"I —I don't know, uncle. It will come in good time," hesitated Markle. "I don't think it has occupied public attention in the North. The truth is, there's a prejudice against your color up there."

"In de Norf? I tought dey wur all friends—dar," suddenly turning toward the northern sky line, the blankness of doubt

coming into his face. "Praps dem of my color dat goes dar is onusual wicked, suh, 'longside of de whites as has had schools and dere freedom always?"

"No, not worse than the lower class of whites," said Markle, uneasily. "We'd better not talk about this matter any longer, uncle. It's the color, I think."

"Yes, suh. I'se been detainin' you too long," humbly. "But if you'll allow me, I'll jes say I can't believe dat. You's but a young man, an' I tink you's mistaken. What's de color got to do? I see a man once who'd been bedridden dese many years. For de want of use, his legs wur growed thin an' totterin' like a baby's; he stuttered when he talked; his mind wur nigh gone; he wur brought near to de borders of de grave, an' lef' dar. I tink de men an' women of de Norf ud jine hands to help a missebul wretch like dat. I tink dey's had freedom dar in plenty, an' schoolin', an' easy livin'. Dey's glad to help the poor an' weak to it."

"Well, Nathan?"

"I tought, suh," laying his hand on his stooped, gray head, "I'se like dat man—I an' my people. Would dem gentlmen of de Norf hold back my chance from me an' trample me under foot—seein' my great an' utter need 'cause of de color of my skin? Suh, I can't believe it."

"If we reach the camp to-night," said Markle, abruptly, "what are you going to do then, uncle?"

Nathan did not reply for several moments; drew out his gaudy, yellow and black handkerchief, and passed it over his face, of which the expression varied strangely.

"I fancied," said Markle, gently, "that you had some secret that concerned you more nearly than even your escape from slavery. I thought I might be able to help you."

"Yes, sah," slowly. "You was right. Dar is a matter—" He waited for a moment, and then said, "It wur my intention if I reached de camp, bein' free den, to go roun' by de ribber, trough de guverment lines, back to Alabama agin." He stopped suddenly.

"You have left some one there?" ventured Markle.

"Yes, M's Markle."

"Your wife?"

"No, suh; Anny's not dat." The gray pallor crept out again over his yellow face, hardening its lines. "She wur a house-su'vant of Mist' Larence's, an' Mist' would'n' hab her marry me; but I wur true to her all de same. It wur twelve years I use to go over wunst a week to see her Satu'day night. De Larence plantation wur fourteen miles off."

"Does she know you are coming?" asked Markle, finding that he remained silent.

Nathan wiped his lips, which had grown wrinkled and cold.

"No, suh, she doesn't know. It's four year now since I see her or Tom. Tom's my boy, suh," with an involuntary erection of his whole figure. "When I went dar one Saturday night, expectin' to find dem as usual, de little cabin wur shut up an' empty, an' de mudder an' Tom wur sent away. No, suh, dey wasn't sold. Mist' Laruce's sister, Mrs. Fairview, had swapped a coach-driver, dough, agin de mudder. It's forty-five mile down de country. I couldn't walk dat an' back in de Saturday night, so I nebber see dem since."

"Nor heard?"

"Me nor Anny couldn't write, suh; but Fairview's Jake, he's overseer, he wur down last Spring's a year, an' he told me dat dey wur livin' an' well. He said Tom wur de peartest little un on de Fairview place. I b'leave dat, suh! He fetched me a handkercher from Anny. Her mist' gib it to her Christmas. It wur white, an' Anny had sewed it wid red thread far me, an' dat little debbil had blotted it wid pokeberry juice. 'Dat's my name,' he said. Jake he kerried it in his bag so's de blots mightn't git washed out by accident. I took it berry kind in Jake. Dat was peart in Tom, suh," after a pause.

"Yes, it was. So you are going round by water," thoughtfully. "Our troops have not touched on Alabama yet."

"No, suh?" calmly. "Dey will soon, I s'pose. I feel it as dough de Lord said dat Anny an' me an' hev a home togedder yit, whar I'll not see her jess once a week after walkin' fourteen mile. An' Tom -dar's de makin' of a wunnerful man in dat boy, suh! He's got de handy fingers of our fam'ly," with a hesitating glance at the young man's face. Reading encouragement in it, the little drop of vanity leaked out. "My fader learned locksmithing heself, suh, he wur so 'xpert wid his hands. He b'longed to de Randolphs of Kentucky. He wur one of de oncommonest men darabout, I heerd say."

"You never saw him?"

"Nebber since I wur a boy. His wife, she b'longed to Mars' Strebling, ye see. Dar wur de two of us chillen, my bradder Sap an' me. Sap wur a heap younger dan me. Ole Mist' Barby, Mars' Jeems' wife, she used to keep Sap about de house, 'count of his 'xtraordinary cuteness in makin' little tings an' usin' tools. He'd whittle rings an' chains fur de ladies out of muscle-shells an gum copal, Sap would."

Now Markle belonged to a family with a strong instinct of blood kinship for each other. It mattered a great deal to him whom his commonplace brothers married. It would have cost him and them a bitter pang to give up their little family feast-days, their birthdays or Christmas gatherings, or to sell the old plat of ground which they had beautified as best they could, where their uncle and grandfathers, all the Markles, indeed, that could be brought there

to rest, lay buried. It touched him to see the same feeling reflected in the old mulatto and his kin, who had no common name to link them together.

"You must be near your father now?" he said, with a real interest which brightened old Nathan's face.

"No, suh," doubtfully. "Kentucky's a moughty big place. I'se not heerd frum him dese thirty year. His name wur Hugh. When de Mist' Strebling moved to Alabama, an' took my mudder from him, I heerd it nigh killed de ole man. He wur a quiet, tender-hearted man, dey say. Ole Mast' Coyle Randolph use to visit our place, an' he could easy 've fetched him along; but he never did. It wurn't kind in him. I'd tramp all over Kentucky ef I tought I'd see my fader. But he's dead now s'likely. When Majo Bob brought me up to camp fur groom, I axed him whar wur de Randolph place, but he said de ole man wur dead long ago."

"And your brother?"

"I didn't tell you 'bout Sap? Dat was de curousest of all. M's Jeems, he took Sap Norf wid him to tend some horses he wur goin' to race, an' one of dem people dey call Friends—cause dey's friends to us, she axes de loan of him of ole M's, to try what could be made of him. Af'erwards she sends de price of Sap to M's, sayin' he had oncommon skill in machinery. Af'erwards she sent word he was dead. Since dat we've heerd no more. But dere's been times when it has come home certain to me dat Sap was not dead. I tink if I could find him in de Norf, an' bring Tom an' his mudder to him, what a joyful meetin' dat ud be. Ef he wur libin', an' Anny an' me got Norf, d'ye tink we'd likely find him, suh?"

"The North is a wide place, Nat."

"Yes, bigger dan Kentucky, I reckon. But, tinkin' it over so long, it's allers been borne in on me dat we'd all meet dar some day."

Burley opened the inner door, and Nathan grew suddenly silent, knowing by instinct that he was to Joe not a man, but a nigger. But the lonely, quiet old fellow had a new hold on Markle, now that he had a glimpse of the solitary years dragged out in the stable loft, polishing harness, and making plans for the father, and brother, the wife and son, who had literally been more like dreams than realities in his life.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW.

Night began to fall. With the increasing cold the rain froze into a fine, sleety mist, which drove fiercely into the open door of the hut. The men in the back room made ready for departure, carrying

with them the remaining scraps of the cold meat and bread, and a canteen full of whiskey. Joe and the mulatto busied themselves last in bandaging Markle's wounded leg, Barley persisting in taking off his own leggings to envelope the whole.

"I wonder which on us three 'll be left behind?" he said as he rose from his knees. "I doubt we'll not all come safe out of this scrape. I had a feelin' that this vally was onclean and onwholesome when I come in it, as if ghosts, from some murder done, walked here, but I found none. I judge one of us 'll be the sacrifice," looking at Markle with an attempt at a laugh.

"I should hardly call any death in time of warfare unfair. You and I gave up our hold on life when we went into this matter, Joe, and, for my part, I blame nobody that takes it. But," glancing at Nathan at his feet, "in peace—in cold blood, with the name of Christ upon the lips, to sap out the life of a man, that is what I name murder," vehemently. "To leave him neither citizenship, family, woman's virtue, mind, to shut out God from him, as far as in them lay! I think this country is filled with ghosts of murders done! I hope God may teach the North how to lay them."

Burley uttered an indistinct, bewildered growl. Nathan looked up, at first quickly, and then, unable to trace the young man's meaning, turned indifferently away, raking out the few smouldering coals. When he had done this he came up to the pallet on which Markle sat, and stood with his palms together, balancing himself slowly on his heels and toes.

"Well, Nathan?"

"We'se nigh ready now, suh. Dar's on'y one ting dat I hab not mentioned afore. I tought I'd leave you now ontil de time arrived when we shell go, wid God's leave. I had a little plan of my own I'd like to kerry out."

Joe looked round at him suspiciously, but Markle nodded a prompt assent, asking no questions.

"It's dis way, suh," lowering his voice. "You said dar wur thousands of young men come to help me an' my kin to freedom. I don't want, when we kum into camp, dat dey call us lazy niggers, not wurf de freedom. We'd like to help ourselves, my people would, ef we knowed de way. I tought I'd like when I goed wid you an' M's, hyur, into camp to-morrow, to kerry somefin' as ud make 'em see dat we knowed all you gentlemens of de Norf hes done, an' dat we tanked you kindly?" touching his forehead.

"What did you propose to do, Nathan?"

"I hear dat Cunnel Garfield is ig'rant of de number of de forces under M's Marshall, hyur. Dar's a company of cavalry down at Jennie's Creek, an' dat may mislead de Cunnel. I meant to take dat information, suh."

"Can you get it?"

"Yes, suh. Dar's a friend of mine, wid Maje Bob's horses by'm; Cunnel Wilder, he's been over in camp, an' he give me de word of honor dat I shell have dat information to-night. In certain numbers, suh."

"You will insure yourself a welcome, Nathan," said Markle, heartily. "I will be glad if you can do it, if but for your own sake. It will be of use to you hereafter." He looked after the man with a kindly smile. It amused him to see that, with his hand outstretched toward freedom, he had no thought, like Burley, of the chance of death between. His yellow face was lighted with nervous expectation. He laughed in a shrill, childish treble at every silly little mishap in their preparations, in a way which Burley thought half idiotic. "He has begun to taste his freedom," thought Markle. "De mudder," and the home they would find together; the brother, who would be discovered yonder in purple and fine linen, as Joseph was of his brethren; the old man who had been "'xpert with his fingers," and who would come to die among them after some quiet, patriarchal years; most of all, the peart little chap who would take to schooling, to white folks' ways, would be a lawyer, doctor, preacher, but, in any case, stand breast high, firm, and in the front rank of them all. These things were realities to Nathan. They had bided their time, and long; but they were coming. A white man, so near to the goal after forty years' delay, would have been shaken with the last uncertain breaths in soul and body, would have found that doubtful pause before final certainty, harder to live through than all of his hopeless youth and manhood. But to Nathan the hope was certainty. He buttoned his coat, and pulled down his napless beaver hat over his face, preparing to go out into the pitiless night, already in possession of home, freedom, of Anny and his boy. Yet he turned back again for a moment.

"De skiff 'll be at de end of de gully, under dat dead tree, suh, jess at midnight. I'll hev got hyur 'fore dat, God willin', onless—"

"Unless what?"

"I'se gwine to Cunnel Wilder's fur dat information, suh, you know? M's Jeems is still dar, I doubt, an' an'— Ef I shudn't kum back by midnight, don't wait de skiff, suh."

He stopped in the door, looking back into the young man's face, some unutterable terror, the thought of all that he turned away from in this venture, the chance of loss, painted in his discolored face and piercing eyes. For a moment he was deaf and blind. Markle spoke to him, but he made no answer.

"Come back here," said Joe. "Garfield's got scouts. Let 'em do their work. I've a mind to see you through this bout, Nat, an' ther's no sense in yer goin' to put yer neck under halter agin, jest as it's nigh out."

Nathan laughed nervously. "Dar's use in my earnin' my freedom, suh. But I ain't afeard; I'll kum back; I'se got de Lord on my side. Good night, gennlemen," taking off the beaver hat with the little flourish, that belonged to his blood as much as the elastic rebound to cheerfulness. He went down the bank into the road, the dark outline of his figure soon lost in the storm and night. Joe, squatted on a chunk of unhewn log, watched him go and clapped his hands emphatically, first on one knee and then the other, when he turned to Markle:

"Danged ef I ain't got attached to that Nat, in this one day! I spec that ther information might gain Garfield the day, an' root out the seeesh from Eastern Kentucky, eh? Well, now, d'ye know, I'd feel, ef that fellar's took into slavery agin, as if it had been dear bought? Es-pecially by Strebling."

He was silent, his stern face turned to the ground.

"You know Nat's master?" said Markle, with surprise.

Burley nodded his solid head two or three times, with a pause between; the motion was as ponderous as another man's oath.

Markle, after a quick, shrewd scrutiny of the old man's face, kept silence. The sleet, meanwhile, beat sharply on the roof, and the ashes caked and crumbled at their feet in soft, dusty breaths.

"It's not," Joe's hoarse voice broke in gustily, "it's not altogether the harm he did me. Mebbe I could forgive that. Bat, ther's somethin' in the very look and voice of Jeems Strebling, even in his gingerly walk, that riles all the black drop in me. He's mean, he's shaller; that refinement of his'n is like the fioth on that dirty pool outside the door. Somehow, when he comes nigh me, with the remembrance of that old hurt beside, it is as if the devil was stirrin' all the murder up in me. I ain't myself then. I ain't Joe Burley, somehow. I've got lots of friends, you know, Leftenant, lots of friends in camp; same 'way at home; but when I see that man, 't seems as if I hadn't one; as if ther' was nobody bat him an' me, and I'd got now to crush his soul out of his mean, little body. Sometimes, Leftenant, I get afraid of the end of it?" looking at Markle, with a weight of doubt and dread in his heavy eye.

"I suppose, Joe," cheerfully, "the devil takes a visible shape to most of us, at times. I am not afraid of the end of it for you. You keep the Good Man nearer than any man I know, as near as a woman. He'll be there when the time comes."

"I hope so, sir," gravely. "But I'd rather hev a little warnin' before comin' across that man, anyhow. As for me," gathering himself up forcibly, after a little reflection, "as for me lovin' my neighbor as myself, I'm not that sort. Ther's men I'm willin' to help, the more because I hate myself for hatin' them. But the back of my hand's to them, an' I'd hev to turn my natur inside out before I'd get that hand turned to grip theirs as friends. An'

ther's another sham lot" (for Joe's tongue was fairly loose now, and his heart opened) "that I don't hate. Only when they come afore me with their mincing, unnateral ways, an' piping, false tones, I feel as if I'd like to roar and curse and growl out all the bad that's in me, jest to let them hear a nateral voice. Rossline's jest that way. I've seed it in her face, when I had it in my mind. Rossline's a Burley—ther's no froth in her natur."

"What time, Joe?" abruptly, for he had a fancy that in this desultory talk, they were walking among graves, known to the old man. Burley lugged out a thick silver watch.

"Seven o'clock. Nathan hes five hours afore him."

They fell into silence after that. The storm, as the hours neared midnight, cleared away, and a watery, gray light, a prelude to the coming moonlight, thinned and softened the sky up from the horizon. The distincter light made them more cautious; they spoke in whispers; Joe put out his pipe; tried to smother his sneezes and coughs, which broke out, perforce, in hoarse bellows now and then. From the background of the room, where they sat in shadow, they could look down into the open stubble field below the hut, and see the black blot that marked the entrance to the gully between the mountains. The shifting, feeble rays of the moon were beginning to loom decisive in the air; the black skeletons of the trees that lined the base of the mountain, and, above them, its blue-gray, slaty face rocks, down which the trickling water made a shining glimmer. A dead silence reigned, save when the plash of the rain and sleet, falling from some weighted branch, startled them.

"Ther's no securer hidin' than here, till time for the shift," whispered Joe. "We'd better lay low till midnight. I kin kerry you through that gully in a few minutes. It's likely Nat 'll be at t'other side, waitin' in the boat."

Markle nodded gravely. He feared that, of the three who had kept watch that day in the hut, but two would be taken, and the other left. He had a depressing conviction which he could not shake off that Nat and his people were born to an heirship of hopeless ill-luck and disaster. First, slavery; and then, he had lately been among the hordes of contrabands crowding over into Ohio and Indiana. They were mad with the thirst for freedom. Lincoln was a Messiah to them. The year of jubilee had come, in which all their loss and wrongs were to be repaired a thousand fold, and at once. They congregated tumultuously wherever there was a Federal camp, expecting to find, under the shelter of the flag, clothes, food, and little work. Bringing into this promised land only their rags and ignorance, they were unconquerably lazy, and childishly credulous and affectionate; the Land of Promise was not ready for them; small-pox and fever had broken out among them, and between disease and want they were dying by the score

Nathan belonged to the more self reliant, industrial class of refugees. "But he'll fare no better than the others," thought the young officer, "even if he escapes."

He sighed as he tied the woollen comforter about his ears which the careful old fellow had hung within his reach. Men capable of this dogged loyalty to their friends, and the fierce bravery they showed when tested, deserved better recognition of the world. But what could the young soldier do? Nat was but one of a great, inert, miserable mass. Who could lift it?

"What is it, Leftenant?"

"Nothing. I was only thinking that poor Nat's dream of seeing 'de mudder and Tom' hold the place which any white man's wife or child occupy, is likely never to be anything but a dream. No matter what power or culture he may acquire, the lowest emigrant that comes to our shores would look down on him."

"Sartinly, ef he's a nigger," said Joe, composedly. "A fellar draws a blank in the world ef he hes a black skin, and he ken't make a prize out of it, nohow."

"I think I'd try," said the young white man, quietly laying one hand slowly on the other, his face a shade paler.

Burley made no answer, and again the hut and dreary fields without waited in silence, while the wintry moonlight whitened over the sky, and drew upon the wet mountain sides and valley below, troops of motionless, unfamiliar shadows.

CHAPTER XX.

THE LOST CHANCE.

The room into which Nathan looked was filled with men who had drawn, according to Joe, blanks in life. They were, however, apparently contented with their luck, which was the worst sign of its worthlessness. It was one of the cabins of the Wilder quarters; a comfortable cabin belonging to Aunt Phebe, the cook. The colonel had a great supper that night, and two or three covered tin pails had been brought out the back way. There were turkey bones, cranberry pie, chunks of white bread dipped in gravy. There was a big fire at which they sat roasting first their faces and then their backs. There were horrible, relishing scraps of news about the battles which Phebe had caught at the dining-room door. There was old Mussy with his fiddle; there were Ben and Joe with their jokes which made even old Uncle Pike grin against his will. What better than this could they have? Colonel Wilder, out of sheer kindness of heart, gilded the blank until it seemed very like a prize. However, they stopped eating to listen to the bits of gossip. Of turkey and pie they knew the taste, but this expectation and mystery were new in flavor. Their masters might shut out their possible future far from them as they would, but when the bugle began to sound among the lines of tents up on "Mars Thoburn's meddar;" when Ben and Joe themselves dug a grave for the Virginia captain picked off by a sharpshooter by the ford, these were miracles which portended a new order of things; and the name "abolition war" brought the meaning of the miracles directly under the comprehension of every one of them.

"Pears to me," said Mussy, looking over his fiddle, "as if dat bugle wur de clarion ob de Lord. De light's dawnin'. De time's come when de da'ater ob my people 'ill arise an' bress God wid satisfaction ob heart."

"Pears to me, then, that you're a fool," said a pert mulatto boy in the door, who, dressed in a suit of young Wilder's, was looking down superciliously on the room and its inmates. "They only want to get us North to sell us agin. Will any of the dam Yankees give me clothes like these, or Miss Clarindy her ear-bobs?" pulling at a pair of gold drops, which dangled on the girl's shoulder.

The old man turned his owl-like face, with its round spectacles,

on the dapper little fellow. "Dat talk's no better dan cracklin' oo tLorns under de pot," he growled. "God forbid as I'd leab M's George, as he's bin like a son to me. But I'm no hyp'crit. I'se work for him free better dan slave, an' I tell hisself so, of'en. 'S fur you, Jim, you'se bin spiled into a no account nigger!"

Jim laughed, looking keenly around the shed meanwhile, until his eye fell on a crack in the weather-boarding, through which a pair of eyes shone in the darkness. "Good by to you all," turning quickly. "Good evenin', Miss Clarin ly," strutting out with his hands in his waistcoat pockets. Two or three shoats followed him, which Mussy drowned out with vigorous scrapings of the last polka.

Outside, Jim, after closing the door, crept round the shed, and found, as he expected, a dark figure silently climbing down from the burrow under the chimney of another and lower hut. When they were standing side by side on the road, Nathan drew the boy deeper under the shadow. He held him by the coat flap, glancing, as he spoke, from side to side, stopping short and trembling at the snapping of a twig, or a sudden pause in the noise inside.

"Wher um yer fadder, Jim? It's done struck eleven—I've got but one hour more. I bin a skulkin' hyur since dark, an' every step's 't de risk ob life."

"He's got you that information," said the boy in a sharp, decisive voice, curiously different from that which he had used to the negroes. "He ken't git away from Mars George out of the dinin' room: at the last minute he sent me. Hyur's the numbers, in black and white," giving him a greasy slip of paper.

Nathan drew a heavy breath as he took it. "I didn't like to go empty-handed, ye see, Jim?" putting it in his waistcoat pocket.

"No?" the boy's grave eyes fixed speculatively on the nervous, distorted face.

"Say, Jim, you'd better come along," whispered Nathan, wetting his parched lips with his tongue. "Dar's a mighty good chance for boys like you in de Norf."

"No," promptly. "Though I thought of that. They ken't fool me with ther' lies agen the Yankees. But they say we'll all be free hyur, an' if things go on as they've begun, Mars George 'll be poor enuff 'fore long. I think I'll stay an' see it through. He's been moughty kind to me."

"I thought by the way you talked to Mussy, you didn't keer fur freedom," hesitated Nathan.

"Mussy's a leaky old fool. Ken't a man keep his mind to hisself?"

"Yes. I'll go now, and tank you, kindly, Jim," holding out his hand, in which he had doubtfully secreted a quarter of a dollar.

Jim put it back loftily. "I've spendin'-money enuff. Mars George s'plies me. Going on foot?"

"Praps," cautiously.

"Good-bye, then, uncle. I wish yer good luck up Norf, dar," with a hesitating, earnest look. "But I'll fight it out long of Mass George, reckon. You'd better keep wide of the gap down to the creek," carelessly, as he was turning away.

"What y' mean, Jim?"

"Mass Strebling an' Major Bob, and two or three more, rode down that way late this evenin'. I heard them say they was goin' to Fisher's Gap."

Nathan stood motionless, allowing the boy to pass him, going into the path to the house. For one moment, sudden terror confused his brain; then thought came, quick and sharp. If they had ridden to the gap, it was in search of him. It was no night to be out riding for pleasure. It might be that the man who was to have brought the skiff had played them false; but at the second thought he put that possibility angrily away; perhaps the smoke had been observed of their fire, or their voices heard. But, however they had been betrayed, there was yet time for him to escape, by going on foot across the mountains, and leaving Markle and Joe to their fate. What that would be, he had little doubt, if they were arrested by Major Strebling as spies. The clock, as he cautiously crept by the house, struck eleven; he walked with laggard, heavy feet out of sight of the house into the shelter of a thick woods, from which he could look straight across the sweep of meadows and winding, sluggish water courses to the two mountain peaks, between which the gully lay like a black blotch. He had an hour; if his master had meant to go to the gap, it must have been only after beating the country round; there was no direct bridle-road; he might yet have time to warn them before Strebling came.

He started forward, walked a few steps, and then stopped, lifting his hat off mechanically, and passing his hand over his bald crown again and again. There was every chance that he was too late: that the Streblings had secured the men, and were lying in wait for him. If he walked into that open trap, there was nothing beyond but slavery. He stood irresolute, the thumpings of his heart under the tawdry old waistcoat checking off the moments; turned the napless hat about, smoothing it with his sleeve, with quick, furtive glances at the road which led to the mountains and freedom, and at the slope down to the gully. Then he drew one or two long, ineffectual breaths; his throat seemed tightening, choking him. He was near to the goal near! The mother an' Tom, the brother he was to find; it all seemed like a dream now, dim, receding.

But the comrades yonder in the gap whom he had left a few hours before they were reality; he had his ration of bread and pork in his pocket now, as Markle had divided it, laughing and

promising him as good a meal as he ever ate when they came to Dubuque, some day. Major Bob would shoot down that little man like a dog on suspicion of being a spy!

He pulled on the hat again, and turning to the gully, ran swiftly down the slope toward it, leaving his chance behind. Nor, as he went, had he any back-looking regrets or pang for what he had given up; he had not coolly weighed one course and its results against the other. He went to help them, running into the jaws of his old slavery because he was a negro, and took care of the present moment, and let the future take care of itself; besides, he was certain, without reason, that when Markle and Joe were safe, he and the wife and 'boy would find the good home waiting and ready for them in the North; because he was a man, and with every step he took toward the men who were in peril, that fever of courage grew on him and possessed him which drives the soldier into battle with a shout, who would have whined and trembled before a lingering sickness.

He felt his bones grow supple, and the blood throb hotly as he leaped over fences, climbed down the rocks, and waded through the icy creek.

"I'se bound to get dar in time," he muttered breathlessly. "De Lord's on my side."

He broke down soon, and was forced to walk slower, panting, to recover his strength. He was the more tired because he could neither sing nor whistle. He crept stealthily through one or two negro quarters on his way, for the land is broken up into small farms here. But the huts and farm-house alike were wrapped in sleep. At last he reached the creek; before he had gone through more than one field opening on the muddy bank, he heard a man's step coming toward him, making a weak effort to tread lightly on the crackling stubble. Nathan dropped behind a thicket of scrub oaks. The moonlight fell full on the figure of the intruder, a shambling, over sized mulatto, with skin of a muddy, sickly white.

Nathan, seeing him, came out boldly. "You dar, Steve?"

The fellow threw out one hand to keep him off. "Now, far de lub of God, let me go. I'se out widout a pass; you knows dat. I'se done my sheer."

"Is de skiff dar?"

"Yes, it's dar," in a shrill, terrified whisper. "I fotched it down below de gully. Ole mars is scourin' de country like de debbil."

"Is he by de gully?"

"Praps dey is by dis time; Major Bob an' some o' dem sojers dey 'long. Thoburn's overseer, he fotched word dat you an' a white man war hid along de creek, and M'ars, he tought you mought be in de gully, or so high as de mill. Dey went fust to de mill."

Nat stayed for no parting words, but broke into the thicket again, with a new chill creeping through his veins. If he had been arrested in an effort to escape, he would have dreaded nothing worse than a lashing; but to be found in company with a Yankee spy was another matter. But his blood was up now, and he pushed on resolutely. The moonlight was clear, differing from day only in its spectral whiteness. The yielding mud of the fields, that had clogged his feet, began to harden in the freezing air, forming a crust that broke crisply as he tramped on it. His road led him along the shore of the creek. When the gully lay but half a mile in advance, he stopped to consider. On his right hand was the broad, creeping stream; in front rose the mountain, on the far side of which opened the gap. But on his left hand, before he reached the mountain, was a long, sharp-ridged hill, from the top of which he could command a clear view of the inside country, and of the circuitous course of the path by which Strebling and his party must approach. It needed but a moment's pause to determine; then, with the aid of the straggling roots and saplings, he scaled the rocky ascent. The wind attacked him clamorously as he reached the top. Taking shelter under a bent cedar, he covered his eyes with his hand and looked slowly with bated breath up the road that unfolded like a curling, yellow belt through the valley below him.

At first when his eye had passed cautiously along from point to point, he gave a motion of quick relief; then, with a sudden shiver knelt down throwing his arm over his head, and threw himself forward flat on the ground, eye and ear fixed like a pointers, on a group of scarce perceptible moving shadows, rapidly approaching from a spot where the road cut through a clump of trees.

A moment's keen survey, then he dragged himself up.

The road was circuitous; that gave him time. He thought of this as he plunged down the hill-side, with eyes half closing, and teeth firmly set. He thought he could reach the gully in time to save Markle and Joe. But for himself, it was noticeable that from the first sight of his master and his companions riding gallantly along the road, his courage and hope died suddenly and utterly out. James Strebling's lean, dainty person, the moods on his dish-shaped, sandy face, were the highest absolute law to Nat; he never had known any other: and law came to him with its usual vague, invincible terrors to the vulgar and ignorant. He did not reason, nor struggle. The stable, the harness to rub, the long, sleepless, thoughtful nights, that was what life had for him. Tom growing up into a handsome, strong man, unseen, and unknown, Anny finding some other husband; for she was yet young, he had thought of that possibility before. And the home in the North which might have been, was waiting and ready. But it was not for him.

He stopped then, and putting his hand in the breast of his coat, drew out a pistol, rusty and patched. Years ago, he had found it, and tinkered it into shape, moulding bullets whenever he got a bit of lead, to be ready for this day. The day had come now, and the hour. He inspected the cap, and keenly. If it came to a hand to hand fight, he could hold his own. He could put the muzzle to the breast of any of those gray-coated soldiers who were hounding him down, who stood between him and freedom, and send them to hell, composedly.

But M's Strebling and Major Bob? His hand shook, his eye wandered unsteadily. Against his will there rose before him remembrances of kindnesses which Strebling, in his stiff, pompous way had showed to him; of money he had thrown him when passing through the stable yard, of little dishes sent from the house table when he was sick in his loft. Trifling kindnesses, perhaps; but the money had been given with a joke, and Strebling had heaped the dishes with his own hand, choosing of the best. As for young M's ——; he was angry that the usual warm, jolly feeling crept into his heart which the thoughts of the genial, vain young fellow always brought with it. Once or twice the boy had lashed him with his own hand, in his tempests of fury. There was a scar across Nathan's bald pate where his leaded whip had laid the flesh open to the skull, one day, while the gray-headed man stood humbly holding his horse. But none of the servants remembered these things. He was always ready to beg a holiday for them, to contrive that they shared his own. On the days when Nathan had been going to see Anny, at Fairview's, the lad had never failed to get him off an hour or two earlier, or to run out with some gaudy cravat or jacket of his own, in which Nathan might look his best. More than that, he had inspected him anxiously, as if he cared how he looked.

Nathan uncocked his pistol and dropped it in his pocket.

He was a chattel once more. He remembered, as he crept over the slippery edge of the rocks, that his people stood as he did, through all the South, with their hands stretched out for freedom, knowing that if this chance failed, the day of their deliverance would never dawn; and though they fought bravely when they were suffered in the ranks, there had been no midnight murders, no insurrection.

"De marsters didn't know de harm dey done, mebbe. I'se 'll not strike de hand dat's been kind to me. I'se 'll not disgrace my color," muttered the man who had henceforth no name but Nathan.

He plodded on; a ridiculous object enough, if he could have met the eyes of fun-loving Major Bob, caracoling along on the other side of the road on his finely appointed black mare. His old dress-coat was buttoned tightly about Nathan's spare figure, the red shirt

protruding in blotches, the tails hanging tattered and wet; the high hat battered down over the worn, sickly, coffee-colored face. Coat, and hat, and face, alike worn out and abused, were all of the man that his young master could ever see or know; but there was One that night who looked with like tenderness into the hearts of master and slave, and judged both with juster eyes than ours.

When the hill and mountain were both skirted, Nathan had reached the end of the gully which opened on the river; the hut lay near the other end, between him and the pursuers. Once he had caught a faint echo of their horses' hoofs, but it had died out. Out of sight of them the man's heart began to flutter again feebly. If it were possible—even yet! He stooped down and began to run, groping along the bushes that hung over the water, searching for the skiff. If he could bring it up to the gap it would need but a moment to summon the men; once in the boat there were hiding places all along the shore, where they could be safe until the danger was past. As he was scrambling along, half in the water, like a dog, a heavy hand caught his shoulder.

"Nathan?" Joe's mountainous shape rose before him from out of the undergrowth.

"It's me, suh. De skiff! dey's on us," in an unnaturally quiet voice.

"Who?"

"Ole M's. It's you and me, suh, he's huntin'. I 'spect I'se got to go."

"James Strebling? Is he coming here to-night? Hunting me like a wild beast? Let me go, Nathan," gravely disengaging his sleeve from the mulatto's hand. "I've had business a long while with him. It can be done to-night as well as any other time." The voice was calm as usual, but Nat felt the old man's burly form shake under his hand as if writhing under a blow.

"M's Markle, suh? Dar's a co'prals guard wid M's Strebling."

"I forgot the Leftenant. Ther's that skifft under the paw-paw bush yonder. Tow it up to the end of the gap an' I'll kerry the little fellar down. Did you get that ther information?"

"Yes, suh." He stopped with one foot in the water. "Kin I go? Don't leab me wid M's Strebling. It's my las' chance, suh."

"Yes, in God's name, yes," Burley growled out, almost angrily. The sight of the poor wretch tugged at his heart with such a sense of absolute pain. As he went lumbering up to the hut he thought he heard a sound of stealthy footsteps and whispers beyond, on the other side of the rocks. But they ceased almost as soon as heard.

Nathan towed the skiff down, walking in the water lest his steps should crush the brittle twigs with which the shore was strewed. He saw Burley leave the hut, half carrying Markle over the ruts. He held his breath, looking for them to be stopped by the flash and

report of a rifle. But they came swiftly and silent as shadows, through the moonlit space. Markle scrambled nimbly as a cat into the skiff, catching the mulatto's hand with a hearty grip as soon as he could reach him.

"Now for it, comrade! Hurra for the old flag and freedom!" in a cheery whisper that brought the blood tingling hot and fresh to Nat's heart.

Barley meanwhile was fumbling in the bottom of the boat. "Ther's only one oar," he said, looking up, blankly.

"No matter; we must make it answer," said Markle, sharply.

"Dar's no time to lose. Dey ought to have reached de gully by now," Nat muttered, a clammy sweat breaking out over his face. But Joe, without heeding them, stepped out of the skiff, and pushed it rapidly up the stream under the shadow of some impending rocks.

"It will lose time in the end to go with one. Ther's a piece of board yander in the hut that'll serve;" and, without waiting to argue the point, he turned back and reentered the ravine.

The silence was oppressive. The two men strained their ears to catch any sound which might warn them of the approach of the men. One, two, three minutes passed, and Burley did not return. Nathan moved uneasily from bow to stern. The time lengthened.

"Ef you're willin', suh," said Nathan, rising, "I'll step yander an' look up de gully to see where he be."

Markle nodded, and the mulatto, after carefully pushing the boat out of sight into the little cove, crept cautiously into the open space and peered toward the hut. He saw nothing; but taking a step or two forward, a riding whip fell on his arm, and looking up, he found himself face to face with Major Bob.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE GHOST OF A MURDER DONE.

Burley, not finding his bar of wood in the hut, was groping for it outside, when a step beyond in the field caught his ear. A moment after, a board from the opposite wall of the hovel was wrenched violently away, and looking in through a crack, he saw Strebling's sandy face, with its perpetual half smile on it, thrust through the aperture, peering eagerly from left to right, noting the yet smouldering ashes, the straw pallet on which Markle had lain, the empty whiskey flask. Then he disappeared for a moment and came in at the door, turning over the straw and ashes with his cane in a gingerly way, at which Joe laughed grimly through all his rage and alarm. There was no time to lose, however. Strebling, it was

probable, would be followed by others who would be keen-witted enough to make use of the scent which he had discovered, and which, judging from his face, had reduced him to total imbecility with mild, surprised dismay. What between the suddenness of his peril, and his hatred of the man which had become a part of his nature, Burley felt his knees shake under him, and a clammy sweat break out over his body.

His narrow forehead cowered, and his eyes, staring on his old enemy through the crack, burned vindictively. Margaret's old wrong, however held out of sight, had been one of the few ideas which had given to his contracted life consistence; it had always been present, a latent, smouldering fever, which at a touch rose to madden him.

He cocked his pistol and levelled it, thinking vaguely something about Strebling having been sent there to meet his reward; but he did not fire.

Thinking, as his bony forefinger flattened itself about the trigger, that in another second it would be too late; that Strebling would step back out of range, give the alarm, and there would be no further chance for the men in the boat, or himself. The muzzle shook as it rested in the knot-hole; yet he did not fire.

Thinking that Strebling was a Rebel, that the shot which took his life was only just work in defence of the Government: passing his disengaged hand over his wet forehead. Turning, he saw four or five men huddled together, coming rapidly up to the hut, two of their number being left on the road. He had but one chance to fire at the man inside. The shot he knew would bring the sentinels, with the others, for a moment into the hut, and then he would have a breathing space for escape. The moonlight fell upon their faces, and they were so near that he could trace every feature. Within, Strebling had raised himself, and was tapping with his rattan on the floor for the men to approach. It was not Burley's habit to reason; but he did it in that breathless moment as he took surer aim at the slim, padded figure. It was only the patriotic work he had come there to do. Besides, the man had wrought well for death at his hands: it was duty, self-defence, justice.

The pistol in his trembling hand fell by his side.

"It's murder," he said, quietly, half aloud, and turned his back on the hut. Yet he never hated Strebling with such unsated revenge as when he spared his life. From the shadow in which he stood concealed, the ground fell in a gentle slope to the entrance of the gully, bare of trees and lighted clearly by the moon. The men had stopped, whispering together, and stood directly between him and his path to the boat. They were all armed, some of them with their pistols in hand. Joe examined the cap on his own, and with

a sharp breath and fierce, back-turned look to Rosslyn, and the Good Man, and home, dashed headlong among them.

One he thrust aside; a blow from the bar of wood which he held, leve'led another. The men, taken utterly by surprise, staggered apart, looking after him as he ran toward the gully. Then they broke into oaths, and half a dozen bullets rattled about him as they followed him pell-mell, Strebling at the hut door shouting shrilly to them. They were young men; but the fury that had possessed him gave Burley new strength. He turned at the entrance to the gully and fired, aiming at the foremost, who fell with the ball in his knee; the second shot made another reel back. Joe heard no step near him as he passed through the ravine, now clearly lighted. Plunging into the low undergrowth that edged the shore, he ran, stooping like a dog, toward the boat. It lay completely hid by the shadow, but Markle had dragged himself out on the muddy bank, and was pulling himself along from one tree to another, his useless leg trailing after him as Burley came up to him.

"I heard the shots—I was coming."

Joe gave a fierce, nervous laugh. "In with you, Leftenant."

"Not without Nathan. Where is he?"

"God knows. Strebling's got him, I reckon," lifting the smaller man unceremoniously into the skiff. The men had reached the creek bank about twenty yards above them, the thicket of paw-paw bushes intervening, and, after a moment's baffled pause of curses and random shots, they divided to beat the shore in pursuit. Burley paused with one foot on the gunwale.

"I ken't leave that darkey."

The steps crushing through the bushes drew rapidly nearer.

"Look yonder," whispered Markle; "we can do nothing."

Joe looked up to a sort of plateau on the mountain side just above them, where, by the clear moonlight, they saw Nathan and his master. Major Bob had evidently driven him there for the purpose of reconnoitreing. The gold lace on his uniform glittered as he stooped over the precipice, glancing from side to side along the river. Even in the act of watching, his gallant face and figure were careless, insouciant. Poor old Nat was behind him, leaning against the rocks, his hands hanging by his side inert and limp.

"It's too late," said Markle.

Burley nodded, and stepping into the skiff, he pushed it down the stream close to the edge of the shore. Neither man spoke for some minutes, each of them glancing now and then up at the lonely, miserable figure which, with its tattered old hat and clothes that had aped the gentleman, lay, rather than stood, against the hill, like one whom fate had grown tired of torturing, and thrown aside. Defeat was in every draggled, motionless limb. Even in the mo-

ment of their extreme peril, the contrast between the slave and his master touched both men in the boat. Joe could not be quiet.

"Them's hard lines," he whispered, leaning over as he pushed the oar against the shelving bank. "I'd like to put a bullet in that young fellar's gilt breast! Nat's true grit. He never turns a look this way."

Markle made no reply, but his eyes were fixed on the negro rather than on the shore along which the men were coming in swift pursuit. The bushes which had sheltered the creeping way of the boat along the bank, gave place to a bare slope of clay and mud. Burley paused on the edge of the unprotected stretch of water curdling dingily in the light.

"Ef we get apast that, we're safe," spitting on his palms, and bending to his rude oars. Markle drew one long breath as with swift, steady strokes the boat shot out into the open light in full view of their pursuers. There was a chorus of fierce yells, and two or three shots that struck the water, whizzing alongside. Burley strained until the veins stood out purple on his forehead. "I think we'll make it," he said.

Once out of the light again, they would be safe from the guns, and the precipitous sides of the mountain forbade chase.

While the boat was shooting through this open space, Mr. Strebling climbed upon the ledge where his son stood. He was paler than was his wont; the smile had deepened into a pitiable, nervous contortion.

"I know that man, Bob," he said, putting one hand on the young officer's shoulder, and nodding down to the brawny figure and gray head rising and falling with each stroke of the oars. "I—I'd rather you'd not shoot," as Major Strebling freed his right arm from his hold, muttering a curse on Yankee spies.

His father rubbed his clean-shaven chin tremulously. "He's really a clever fellow, and he he may be missed. He has been very kind to a friend of mine, Robert."

The decisive young soldier was used to his father's hesitating dribble of talk; it fell apparently unheard on his ears, while he waited, with pistol pointed, till the boat should come within range. Nathan, who had stood with motionless eyes while the skiff was undiscovered, came mechanically to the edge of the plateau, a little apart from the others, as soon as it glided into the light, and bending lower with each stroke of the oars, stood with both hands stretched toward it, dumb, as though the soul in the weak shell of a body could find no cry for its great and irreparable loss.

The boat took with it his chance of manhood, of home, of wife, and child. He could see the face of the first white man who had given him his hand as freely as Christ would have done, turned

toward him; turned with an awful unable pity in it, dimming and dimming in the distance, as the hope was dimming out of his life.

A flash from Major Strebling's pistol, a light wreath of smoke in the moonlight, and a crisp, rushing sound passed through the boat. Burley started, threw himself forward.

"Joe!"

"It's nothing." But he set his teeth as he pulled a few long, desperate strokes that drove them out of danger into the shadow.

"We are beyond their reach now," said Markle. "Give me the oars, I can pull strong enough to take us down stream."

"Wait a bit, I haven't done my sheer," with ponderous, steady motion.

Markle looked back once more to Nat's thin figure bending over the cliff with his hand held out mechanically. There was neither imploring nor farewell in the gesture, nor in the face over which a ray of moonlight fell; but there suddenly broke on the air a low, solitary cry, inarticulate, full of unutterable anguish and loss.

It went with them into the darkness which they entered. The tears came to Markle's black eyes; hot, bitter tears, such as had risen there once when he had looked on the dead face of one very dear to him. It seemed to him that the mulatto's lonely figure was the type of all his people. He said again, that it was the ghost of a murder done, and wondered if God meant that life should ever return to it; life such as that which throbbed in his own indignant pulses; or would it always cry, and wring its hands in vain?

The darkness about them was heavy; the young lieutenant, stooping forward to take the oars from Burley could not see the old man's face; but Joe would not give them up. He continued to pull for a few moments, then the strokes grew uneven and labored.

"I reckon you kin take them, Leftenant," he said, "this water's gettin' too hefty for me."

He made no reply after that to Markle's occasional whispers, and when the young officer, becoming alarmed, put out his hand and touched him, Burley's heavy body sogged down on the floor, and beside the board on which he had been sitting there was a thick pool of blood.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE LAST DAY AT THE FARM.

It was one of Doctor Brodcrip's holidays. A holiday was as weighty a matter with him, as if he had been a schoolboy all of his life, or a bound apprentice. He used to plan them for weeks before, crowding and arranging operations and visits so that one day might be free. If there was a flaw in it, if there was rain when the

day came, or an unexpected case called him to the hospital, he sulked like a boy, and wreaked his vengeance on everybody who came within his reach.

This day, however, was clear and warm as if sun and air had joined to help him to give himself enjoyment. He rose, as was his habit on these fete-days, an hour or two earlier than usual, so that not a moment might be wasted, and after he had bathed, dressed, and taken his glass of claret and a biscuit, he came down the stairs feather-light in head and feet, whistling boyishly as he stood twirling his cane at the hall door, glancing up and down the street.

He was so eager for pleasure on these days, so unlike a full grown man in the whole matter, that the whim had puzzled Miss Conrad more than she cared to tell. "It must be," she said once, "that your life in Franco gave you this relish for fetes." At which he had smiled and changed color, but made no reply. He managed somehow, not only, like a bee, to extract the honey from every mo ment, but to carry the zest and flavor of each moment with him all day. He had some peculiarity of temperament, too, which enabled him to draw physical or mental luxury out of the, to us baldest commonplaces. While he stood now on the doorway, the hoar of morning gone was present and alive to him; the chilly plunge into the water, the fine crisp linen rubbing against his skin, the gems sparkling unseen; the sober suit of gray that covered this dainty fastidiousness with a decorous mask; the pure air coming to his langs; all remained sentient to him. Phil followed him about, holding by his coat, and, when he left the door, roared vigorously; the birds in the conservatory beat their wings against the glass as he passed; the hounds came after, one of them walking inside of the iron fence, keeping stately step with him, and as he went down the pavement, looking after him with sorrowful eyes. That pleased him. It was something, he thought, outside of a man's usual nature to be so closely akin to children, to birds, and fowls, and beasts. He knew one woman who was the same. But he did not smile at that; the thought of her lay too deep and secret for even that outward show; the delight, the dream, which was hidden in his soul unknown almost to himself; as the fairy land of Summer, its many-colored blossoms, its plenty, and its harvest sleep beneath the miry clay and unmelting snow.

Formerly, these gala days had apparently given Broderip very doubtful satisfaction. There had been times when, before night came, his most morose mood would set in, and he would leave music, or pictures, or stables whatever amusement he had planned, and end the evening in reckless play, which took the place to him of debauch to other men, or in sitting alone, looking drearily out into the gathering night. Lately he had made no plans, but when the

days came (and they were very frequent now), he turned mechanically to old Hugh Conrad and his daughter, and left them to fill the time for him as they pleased.

Broderip was an untiring walker. He started off at a brisk pace down the street toward the dêpot, the tune which he had been whistling keeping up its merry jingle in his head. Turning into one of the quiet side streets, he came to the gate of a Friends' burying-ground, and taking a pass key from his pocket, he opened the gate and went in, passing rapidly to a corner where was a scarce raised, unmarked mound The grass was already green over it, although little heaps of snow lay in the hollows near; a path was worn from the gate to its side; well worn by many feet, yet, perhaps, none came there whom the gray-headed old man resting beneath, had not helped up on their life's journey.

He had been kind to the famous surgeon once; it was Broderip's habit always to come here on the beginning of one of his holidays, just as, gambler and profane as he was, he often secretly said a prayer before he listened to fine music, or took up his scalpel, or played with Phil; everywhere, in fact, but when he began to eat.

While he stooped to pick off one or two rotting leaves from the old Quaker's grave a quizzical smile crept out on his face, fancying that the shrewd mouth and keen, blue eyes in the face beneath the grass and clay were turned up to him intelligently. A faulty, whimsical, old man, loving his dollars much, but his friend more; with a mania, as people called it, of thinking any man his friend for whom Christ died; a man who would dun a debtor twenty times for a penny, and who had given thousands to the anti-slavery cause, and the needy poor of any creed or color.

The smile passed off of Broderip's face, and he stood, earnestly looking down, through the mound of white-edged grass. One might have fancied that it was a boy presenting himself before his teacher for scrutiny and approval, but for the terrible gravity that gathered in his look; the dreadful consciousness of himself, of his whole self, from the fastidiously clean clothes and skin, into the soul which even the dead man's eyes could not reach; the anxiety of a man who judges himself inexorably as the great book will judge him some day. Such moments come to all of us in life.

He stood quiet for some time; then he stooped calmly again to smooth the grass, glad of the custom which had forbidden any marble or stone to set forth the good deeds of his old friend, but left him near to those he had befriended with only a little warm earth and grass between. Earth and grass were nature's way of saying that life was good, after all; and somehow they seemed to make the little surgeon more akin to his benefactor than any act of their lives had done. For when Broderip, as a boy, had met the old Quaker, there had been words spoken

that were hard to bear, and mortification in his heart that stung like any adder. It was all gone now. When he had cleared away the leaves he laid his delicate hand flat on the ground for an instant with a pleasant smile, as if he bade his old friend a cheerful good-morning, and then rising, he put on his hat and went out.

It was yet early in the forenoon when he reached the little station on the railroad, nearest to Mr. Conrad's farm, and, turning up a lane, struck across the fields; the long repressed whistle turning into a shrill song; jumping the fences and stumps nimbly as a boy. From the moment he stepped upon Mr. Conrad's ground, it was noticeable that he became alive with interest in a manner new to him; stopping to examine a broken part of the fence; prodding his stick into the ground, and examining anxiously the bits of loam that came out on it; leaning over the fence of the cow-yard to discuss with the old farm-hand, Burton, the propriety of putting the west field into oats or barley. For Broderip, as boy or man, knocked about the world, had been everywhere a lodger, sleeping and eating in a house, not a home. He had bought mining and oil claims, in his avidity for money; owned vineyards and cranberry grounds in New Jersey, but he left them to skilful agents. But this little patch of the Methodist preacher's had an interest to him, apparently, such as the poor homestead in which he was born may have to a man of the world. The shabby, whitewashed barn, the clumps of sycamores and locusts along the lane, the great, old black-walnuts shadowing the wooden house, had grown familiar and dear to him as if they belonged to some long-ago days of boyhood irreparably lost. He was more zealous in repairing and beautifying it all than Miss Conrad or her father.

"It is only a rented place to you," he said once, "but it is home to me."

At which Margaret fell into silence, wondering for a long while if it could be that it was the first home he ever had known. Her own local attachments were strong as those of a cat: she belonged to the farm where she had been born and lived as though her very flesh and bones had drawn their being out of it like the pithy young saplings in its woods. It seemed woful and pitiable to her, therefore, that a man should have drifted always about the world without a home. She pitied this queer, unhappy, brilliant little man so much, after that, that her steady voice would tremble suddenly when she talked with him, though for no immediate cause; she would lie awake at nights contriving ways to make his visit the next day cheerful, until her brain grew hot and rasped, and her cool cheeks turned crimson with feverish sleeplessness. When she watched him drive away from the door sometimes, the salt tears would rush into her heretofore gray, resolute eyes, to think how lonely he must be when her father's and her own homely talk could

give him so keen a pleasure. Now, Miss Conrad's was no tender, sympathetic, soothing nature. The tranquil blood in her full veins never quickened at human suffering: flowed on sluggish and forgetful as if it were Lethe's water. "People whined to so little purpose; in fact, the greater number of the women she met were discontented, and the men weak; why could they not keep their paltry pains and joys to themselves?" She turned away from tears, and mourning dresses, and red eyes, disgusted and contemptuous, as from a beggar who showed his sores.

Her father told all this to Broderip one day, while the girl's black brows contracted at hearing her character mapped out, as it were, for a stranger.

"It's some Indian notion of stoicism she got in her youth," said Conrad. "For Meg's dogs and cattle is keered for with her own hands when they're sick, as I never seen a woman do before. And I think she suffers curiously with her old father, as if she and him were twins. But I don't think she keers for any other human creetur, or ever can do it," turning towards her with a tender smile. She met it with one, as tender and beaming, and some joking reply, but her own face was unwontedly pale, and during that evening she had avoided Broderip's eyes.

Perhaps it was out of a polite remembrance of this story of her fondness for animals that the doctor urged upon Mr. Conrad's acceptance one or two fine specimens of cattle, presented to him, he said, by patients, and for which he had no possible place of bestowal. One of these, a fine heifer, stood looking at him now, while he talked to Burton, with her delicate muzzle thrust over the fence bars, and her grave eyes on his face. He went up, stroking its head as he had seen Miss Conrad do. He had been careful not to offer it to her; never to offer her even a flower, though every day the choicest in his green houses were brought to the old man, remembering that she had said once that, to her mind, a gift from an acquaintance was an impertinence; but that if she loved, she would be glad to go to her master needy as Ruth to Boaz. Broderip had not forgotten the words, nor her face as she spoke them.

"As for that heifer," said old Burton, laying a rope about the broken gate, while the doctor bent the cow's head down to his hand. "I know nothin' about it. Miss Conrad, she hes it in charge, an' them Westerners is cussedly set on their own ways," stopping short, and giving the rope a vicious pull as Mr. Conrad, his cane held obliquely before him, came across the yard. Broderip noticed, with his usual suspicious instinct, that the old man did not meet him with his ordinary hearty shout of welcome. He took his hand from the heifer's neck and stood on guard, as it were, on the in-

stant, his thin lips compressed, and his watchful eyes on Conrad's face.

But the preacher, though embarrassed, was cordial enough. "I thought you would be out this morning," holding out his hand; "and Meg said it was your voice she heerd, singing, coming across the meddar; but I couldn't hear it, sharp as my ears are set." There was a certain tart impatience in his tone, new to it, of which Broderip thought it wisest to take no notice.

"My ears are worth enough to tell me what you're a-doing, Burton," growled the old man. "You're patching that hinge agen with rope. You know where to find the tools, I reckon. Go fetch them."

To which Burton replied, when at a safe distance, that he "wasn't a mule or a slave, neyther."

"He's a cantankerous old fool," said Mr. Conrad, when they had left the cow-yard, and were slowly walking side by side down the slope toward the house, the half decayed stubble yielding underneath to their tread. "He's one part of the concern I shall not be sorry to leave behind when we go." Broderip turned quickly toward him, but said nothing.

"He's a makeshift and sham, like his hinge," striking the ground with his stick, keeping an angry time to his words. "There's a good deal of onreality and sham creeping into the world, any way. It's so hereabouts, at least, I think; out West it's different."

"How—different?" asked Broderip, gravely, passing his hand over his clean-shaven, hollow cheeks.

The old preacher coughed and cleared his throat. Whatever was the secret thought that goaded his ill-temper, it was apparently one which he wished to conceal. "I mean what I say; no more, no less. A man offers himself there at his real vally. To love means to love, and to hate means a short fight, tough blows, and then it's done with. But there's polish on all men here alike, and how're you to know if it's the real wood you've got, or just second-hand work veneered?"

Now, instinct is a keener expert than reason at interpreting covert undermeanings, and the thin little man in gray, walking beside Conrad, knew as clearly that these words were meant for himself as though the old man had named him. After all, when you wound a man's self-respect, you touch something which lies below any love or friendship. There was a single moment of silence, and then the surgeon said, in a quiet, authoritative tone, "I, at least, am clear of your condemnation. I have made no professions, and have played no part with you. I felt myself fit to be your friend, and," his voice growing harder, "the friend of your daughter, and I feel that I am so still. I never offered myself as your spiritual colleague or business adviser." He was silent a moment, "There may

be relations which I can never fill, but that of an honest man or a friend, is not among them."

"I know it, Broderip, I know it!" gripping his shoulder, suddenly. "I talk like a brute to-day. But I've had trouble that's nigh driven me to the wall. I'm soured and suspicious agin' all the world but Meg. There, there! let me alone a bit! I'll tell you after a while," and they walked on together without speaking. Conrad's head sunk upon his breast. Only, in token of his kindly feeling, the impulsive old fellow kept his hand on Broderip's arm, leading him as if he were a boy.

The surgeon was very glad to let the matter go. Old men were subject to such splenetic whims and humors. For him, it was his holiday; and he shut his eyes wilfully to any rising cloud.

As they came nearer to the old-fashioned garden surrounding the house, he caught sight of Miss Conrad's figure in the arbor at work among the bare stems of the grape-vines. As soon as he had left her father on the porch he would go and help her, and then all three would go on a long rambling walk over the hills beyond the creek; then, home again hungry and tired, for dinner and reading and music; any of the careless, inconsequent ways in which happy people draw the electric sparks, one after another, from the day.

For Broderip had fallen into this routine with them; he made no motion to alter it; it seemed as if he never meant to put out his hand to alter it, or to change their relations. Why should he? It was a Summer's day, such as never had dawned in his life before. It was, he thought, an ordinary day to her. If there was anything beyond, toward which, at times, he looked with a hunger passing that of women, yet which he denied himself, the loss was but his own. Miss Conrad, he thought, was even more self-reliant, composed, cold, than when he first had known her. True, there were times when this thought of himself as other men, of her as his wife, almost mastered him; the words had trembled on his lips which should open the gateway to that other life; but, as yet, they had never been spoken. In cooler moments, when he was most a man, he told himself resolutely that it could never be; and then he rested in his Summer day, forgetting that after a while the payment of loss must come, and that he alone must bear it. Perhaps the sagacious old man was right, as he listened, with a curious interest, to the uneven, quick fall of Broderip's steps on the clay, as he walked beside him.

"Weak and strong by turns," he thought. "Onstable, onstable as water!" with a sigh. It was a favorite test of character with him. They reached the door and passed into the wide, heartsome parlor. "I'll bring your chair to the fire," said Broderip, "and then go for Miss Conrad to prepare for our walk." But he stopped,

after he had established the old man before the blazing heap of brands, to look at a package which lay on the mantle-shelf.

"They're seeds from the Patent Office," said Mr. Conrad. "Young Randolph sent them to me."

The petulant frown deepened on Broderip's face, he fingered the string impatiently. It enraged him that they should receive the benefit of even a flower from any hands but his.

"I have better specimens than these of the same plants," he said. "Allow me to exchange them."

"As you please," smiling grimly when he heard the seeds crackling in the fire a moment after. "It does not matter," he continued drily. "We shall not need seeds or plants here. I have given up the place."

Broderip stood quite silent, his arm on the mantle-shelf, looking down at him.

"We are going West again—Meg and I."

There was no exclamation or motion of surprise; only a moment's silence, after which the surgeon asked him, quietly, "How soon they were going?"

"In a week."

"*I* did not know it," said Broderip, passing his hand over his head in a feeble, boyish way. "You did not tell me."

"How could I?" roughly, for the surgeon's apparent indifference stung the old man to the quick; he was sore with trouble that day. "We did not know it till last night. Truth is, it's hard for you to understand, Doctor Broderip; you've never been pinched; we had but a pauper's pittance, as it would seem to people in your way of life. That's gone now."

Still no answer.

"Gone," the old man went on mechanically. "There's a firm failed in Ohio where I had my savings invested. They're all washed overboard. We can't afford to keep the place; we faced that at once; so we'll go back to our own country, and scrape along for ourselves."

There was no reply. Broderip, with both hands behind him, was leaning against the wall, staring vacantly out at the muddy slope. There was but one idea clear to him, and that was, that, when he had denied himself Margaret as his wife, he had been a true man; and that this was his reward. Whether the thought was bitter or not, only he and God, who was testing him, knew.

Somehow his silence touched the old man. "I know you're sorry for us," he said, putting out his hand, which Broderip took. "I can bear pity from you. You've been friendlier to me than any man I know here, Doctor Broderip, and come nearer. I'll say that. I've been savage to-day as a miserable old hound, though, that 'ud bite the hand that fed him. It's this, you see," touching his eyes.

"I lost all before, and made a joke on't. But now the work'll come on Meg."

The surgeon muttered some inarticulate words, to which the old man listened with keen attention, but without being able to comprehend them.

"I've got rid of the place remarkable easy," he said, after a pause. "I sent for Holmes, the landlord, this morning, and it seems that Dutchman by the mill wants it, and will take it off my hands at once. He's going to open tavern."

Broderip gave a sudden laugh, and, without waiting to hear more, passed down the room to the door, glancing sharply from side to side: at the window, where Margaret's work-table and chair stood; at the chess-board, the red and white men catching the cheerful morning light; at the old man's leather, easy chair, and his own, near to it. The quiet days he had spent there; the long evenings before the fire, with the red light flashing and darkening; the preacher's drowsy stories, and the one other figure near, toward which he seldom looked, but which was present to him in every sense of his body—all flashed before him in that brief moment of going to the door. Instead, in a week his old friend would have vanished as utterly out of his life as if Death lay between them; there would be a crowd of loutish Dutchmen playing dominoes about the fire; a smell of rum and rotten cheese through the old house, which Conrad was glad to get off of his hands so easily. The weak, nervous little man looked up at it when he was outside, thinking that it was different with him: remembering how he had gone through one day's work after another, with no pleasure to look forward to beyond the hour in the evening under its roof, and how his heart had been used to throb hot and heavy at the mere sight of the old moss grown, decayed porch, as he turned the corner of the mill yonder. In a week there would be no trace of him in the familiar place: Conrad would have gone to older friends; it cost him but little now to part with him, that was evident. If there was any other loss coming which would leave an irreparable gap in his life, he held it back out of sight did not name it, even to himself.

He was unjust to the old Methodist. Half of his bitterness and wrath, to-day, was caused by his conviction that they and Broderip would never meet again, and that the surgeon would not choose to put out his hand to prevent the parting. The old man's love for his daughter was jealous and keen sensed as that of a lioness for its whelps. He had fancied lately, when he touched her, that her firm flesh was growing soft as that of other women; that the eyes were sunken into deeper hollows; there was at times an incertitude in her step, a nervous gayety in her voice, that startled and alarmed him. When this news came to him last night, his first thought was

that now he had a reasonable pretext for removing her from danger. Yet the old man had an oddly affectionate nature, and he had taken this Broderip into his heart with something of the feeling he might have for a maimed son, whose power and disease were both beyond his comprehension.

"But he shall not play fast and loose with my Meg!" he said fiercely, after the surgeon had left the room. He rose, went to the window, and stood there, his head a little bent, to hear the retreating footsteps on the ground. More than ever, the step seemed to him irresolute and wavering. His face cleared at last. "He's gone to her," he said, turning away, and beginning to pace up and down, his stick slightly before him. "If he loves her, it'll force itself into words now," he thought. "There's not many men would turn from a woman left in want as Meg's likely to be. At any rate, John Broderip's not the one to do it. He's the true grit. Though," recollecting himself, "there's no denying that he has not made his suit as I did to Priscilla."

The difference in their social position never entered the simple-minded old man's head; if it had, he would have said that his girl was a wife for the best man in the land, and thought no more about it. The change in their fortunes, too, through the marriage, hardly occurred to him, as he walked, thinking of Meg as a happy wife and mother, with a sagacious, kindly smile on his face. "I could feud for myself if I was back agin among my old people. But I'd come see Meg once a year: about once a year." So he planned and doubted, pondering on trifles, like any girl uncertain whether she was loved or not, his cheeks heating and growing pale by turns. For his daughter was very dear to him, and he fancied her fate for life was to be decided to-day. Was it possible that he could have been mistaken in thinking that Broderip loved her; that his voice, his manner, his very breath altered when she came near him: that his mind swayed to her's, helpless in its passion, as a weed drifting in the tide? Or had he been but a thoughtful friend, and these fancies a fond father's prejudice? So the old man sat and waited, while the morning broadened into noon, and the square shadows of the windows retreated from the floor, and gave place to a cold, universal glare. They had gone to walk alone: but he was too honorable to follow the sound of their steps over the garden walks, and try to catch their secret.

"Meg will come and tell me of her own free will, when all is well with her."

Broderip was not a man to discuss coolly with himself the right and wrong of any intended action. Thought and reasoning came to his unequal brain in a series of analogies or flashes of pictures. As he went down through the scattered, leafless sycamores to the garden, his eyes were fixed on the slow, sinuous motions of the girl

in the arbor as she stooped or rose, cutting branches from the bare vines. In the dull stubble fields around, or the formal, fenced little garden, with its square beds of dried and decaying vegetables, and wet tan-bark walks between, there was hint neither of color or light: the sunshine was pale and thin, the wind rattled the bare, black boughs overhead drearily; but there was power of motion in her slow figure, affluence of color enough to fill the whole day with life. She had thrown back the sweeping fur cloak until it drooped from her shoulders in large folds: beneath, the heavy dress of ruddy hue showed the full contour of her head and bare throat, solid and pale as yellowish marble, with the black coils of hair falling loosely down: there was a new brilliancy in the crimson cheeks and gray eyes, large and piercing under their straight brows. Ceres might have so stood, waking in the late Autumn fields, discrowned and unqueened, save for the potent mastering strength in her own broad bosom.

She smiled when he stopped, leaning over the gate, regarding her, then went on with her work, having apparently forgotten that he was near. The little man, who had no Saxon plucky endurance in him to battle with pain, let his chin fall on the gate, while his eyes silently devoured her every motion. He was worn-out: his life, as the rules of men had bounded it for him, and the life that should have belonged to him as a man, had faced him so barely a moment before! The pain of the day had sucked the strength out of him: this was its first actual pleasure, and here was rest and luxury for every artistic sense in his nervous body.

He watched her move as, sleeping, he would watch a scarce defined dream of comfort and cheer: there was prophecy in it, as in inarticulate music which, full and uninterpreted, seems to pass on with us through the approaching years; he stood, weak and idle, listening. There was but little passion in his feeling for Margaret that day; she seemed to him to idealize his life as it might have been; he looked at her with unable eyes, stretched ineffectual, groping hands toward her; conscious of how beaten and misused and wornout he was. If she would put one of her cool, strong hands on his throbbing forehead, he could shut his eyes and be content to die, giving up the battle, and owning himself worsted.

Afterward, to his tired, uneasy brain, there came the remembrance that she was poor now; miserably poor, it might be; he began to picture her as a drudge; he could save her from this; if he did not save her, indeed, there was a chance that her father would think he had been false and unfair in his conduct to her.

But if he did it; if he kept her here?

His breath struggled quick and hot through his breast, he put one hand over his face to hide the glowing eyes. Another picture came up to him. Of the stately house he had built yonder,

with Margaret in it as his wife; but it was a poor home for her—meagre and dull. It should be made beautiful as a fairy palace; she would help him, through the great love he bore her, to cast off the last remnants of his old animal nature, to reach the true manhood—he would spend his life in helping others. For her—he would shut her away from every eye, he would so surround her with homage and honor that she should desire no glimpse beyond. She should be his alone; the reward for all the loss that had gone before!

He lifted his head, and opening the gate went toward her, the sensitive pale face, lighted by some subtle spirit of power and triumph. Margaret, seeing him come, turned with the old composed smile to meet him. But the hand which fell by her side closed suddenly until the nails pressed hardly in the flesh.

"Will you come down this path with me?" he said, quietly. "I have a story to tell you. You deferred it once. But you will hear it now?"

They turned into a wide walk covered with brown needles of the pines, sodden into the ground. It was then that a little circumstance occurred which, years afterward, Miss Conrad understood, and knew why it had imported much in her life. It was only the approach of a negro servant with a note to her. Margaret unconsciously drew back from the woman before she took it, and when she was gone, shook the note in the fresh air as if it was tainted, before she thrust it in her pocket. Looking up, she saw Doctor Broderip looking at her with eyes that seemed blind, his face quiet and cold.

"I am ready to walk now," she said.

"Yes."

She had a curious flash of conviction when she looked at him, that in that moment some power had thrust them apart as no mountains or seas between could do. After one swift glance, she walked calmly beside him, but the brilliant color had faded a little in her cheeks. He was quite silent, with his hands clasped behind him, his head bent, moving only to push the thorny berry branches out of her way. She had a vague fancy that he was putting on a mask of grave face and controlled voice which was meant to thrust her from him forever; that whatever might be the battle waged in his soul, she would know nothing of it.

When they had reached the branching old cedar at the end of the walk, he brushed the dead leaves from a rough bench below it, and motioned her to sit down; then stood, one arm leaning over the crisped brown trunk, looking over her head into the dead stubble field.

"The story I meant to tell you," he said, in the grave, reticent tone with which he controlled a patient, "can never be put into

words, *now*." He stopped, his throat growing dry and hoarse. "It was a fancy I had," after a moment, in a lower voice. "I had thought of it for a long time. But I do not think, Miss Conrad, that it ever would have imported much to you," with a quick, furtive falling of the eyes to her's. Something which she detected in them, touched her as no words of his had ever done. She shivered as she had done when some animal was being killed near her, and she could hear its inarticulate cries.

"I was too old a man to so dupe myself," with a smile. "But it never can happen again."

"Have *I* hurt you?"

"No. But I have had a miserable secret, and there might come a day when you would know it. I have seen the very look which you would turn on me when you heard the truth."

She turned her face on him now, pale, full of power. "You do not know me. I am no schoolgirl with shallow fancies. I do not veer with every wind that blows."

He came closer to her; he held his breath; stooping, looking into the moist, gray eyes raised to his, full of liquid, trembling light. It seemed to him that some spirit unknown to men, fresh as when God breathed it into her, waited there to meet him at his bidding. The silence about them grew audible: slow throbbing, the beating of his own pulses, filled his ear; the sun which had faded out of its sickly lustre into foreboding shadows, was slowly filled with chilly mist that trailed through the air. A dead twig loosened from the branch above by some wandering bird, fell on his hand. The touch startled him; he stood up like one waking from a momentary stupor, the relaxed features, hardening again, holding one hand across his narrow, stooped chest with a curious gesture of sheltering himself from pain. None but a weak man or woman could have made it.

"I saw the look in your face! I saw the look in your face," under his breath.

The drops of sweat gathered on his own thin visage. "I have had a hard life," slowly, with a queer, far reaching look as though it all were present to him in that moment. "But it would be easier to live it over again than for the day to come when you should know the truth."

The gray eyes grew cold, and fell slowly; when they were lifted again, they swept over his face, over the dull sky and fields with their old calm, resolute, unrevealing scrutiny. Whatever it was that had looked out of its prison-house through them a moment ago, had retreated to its life-long hiding-place never to return. She rose, and drawing her fur cloak closer about her throat, stood beside him, looking down through the narrow, melancholy strip of valley to the horizon up which a storm was rising. She noted, as

she saw everything without looking toward it, that the little man beside her shivered in his thin holiday suit, and that the cough which the cutting mist had provoked, racked and tore his lungs. From feeling of womanly pity, or some other impulse she would have torn her own warm wrappings off to shelter him; but what right had she? If he were dying any other woman would have more seemly right to aid him than she, whom he had thrust from him. She turned toward the house, and he followed her.

"It was a clear morning when you first came to me," he said, with a forced smile. "It suited our meeting, and this seems a fitting day on which to say good-bye."

She made no answer.

"It is better that we should part, Margaret."

The beautiful face was carved between him and the fading light, set and stern. "I wish to work ill to no man. Yes; it is better."

They were passing a clump of branching hemlocks: he put his hand on her wrist, and drew her under their shelter. "Ill to me? It is not that: I would be willing to bear the scorn and loathing of your look, to call you mine for but a day. But you—to see your head go down—down. The jeers the loss that I have always known, to come on you and your children! The stain of it that you never could be rid of!" The words had been driven out of his lips in a shrill, piping outcry. He stopped now, holding one hand over his eyes until he had regained his usual calm. When he looked up, she had moved again away, and again he followed, walking a step behind her, the attitude curiously like that of a servant. But if his humiliation thus weighed on him insensibly, the effect was but transitory. When she had entered the little closed porch which gave admission to the side of the house, he motioned to her to stop, and it was the Doctor Broderip whom his outside friends knew, that stood before her; quiet, reticent, in every motion of the low, trained voice and small features, the sign of thorough, controlled breeding.

"I will leave you here, Miss Conrad."

She turned and waited, facing him, the light which came through the round window over the door, falling on her head, and the half uncoiled black hair wet with the mist on her neck.

"You look jaded and overworked. You need rest," she said, giving utterance to the safe, kindly surface-thought, to fill up the silence between them, and the death that lay in it.

"It is nothing, I am as strong as other men. Except—I have fought my battle ill to-day. I have seemed a coward to you, perhaps, or even melodramatic," forcing a smile.

Her lips moved, but they were hot and parched. They made no sound.

"I think I did what was right." The words fell slowly from his

mouth, hardly breaking the stillness, his eyes turned vacantly out to the far, cloudy sky. He did not seem to heed that she made no answer; but after a long time turned to her with his look searching and eager on her inscrutable face.

"Will you trust me in this? That I tried to do what was best for you, and for me? I wish that you could give me this much comfort to take back with me into my life. It will not have too much of comfort."

She put out her hand, a cordial heat flashing into her face and tone. "I do trust you. Whatever else may fail you in the world, I believe in you. No other man has seemed to me in soul so manly."

Fate at that moment rang out a shrill unexpected note of triumph in John Broderip's life. The man rose to it as to a bugle call. For one brief space the poor little mask of his body dilated and beamed with the thrill within. Then he drew back from her with a softened, smiling face, and tears that had forced their way into his eyes.

"No other woman would have said that after what I had done to-day. It means more than you can ever know—to me. It will make my life different to remember it."

"Is your life, then, so vacant?" she said, hastily, as though some irrepressible power within urged the words out.

He paused a moment thoughtfully. "No. The struggle of it has had payment in itself. There is not a nerve in my brain, or fibre in my body, which has not been trained and worked. That is good," his nostril expanding, his breath coming quicker. "My profession is the work I was made for. And they cannot hinder me from being a man, as you called me, and helping other men. No, my life will not be vacant."

"Helping others? That is work I never thought of."

He noted with his physician's eye that her jaws moved mechanically, that the blood was settling under her eyes, and about her chin and lips. Could it be that the parting cost her anything?"

It was a question he would not ask himself.

"I am going now," he said. "I shall not see you again."

She was silent, the leaden, impassive eyes looking at the wall opposite as though they saw nothing.

"I will be out of the city for some time," a sudden thought coming to him, "and before I return you will have gone."

"It is probable."

"Tell your father, Miss Conrad, that I never could accept the custom of bidding good-by. What does it matter? He knows I am his friend—"

"And mine."

He did not speak; nor, when she made a motion to again hold

out her hand in token of farewell, did he take it, but drew still further back, with the old gesture, one hand, with his hat in it, laid heavily across his chest, and a steeled, self controlled look in his face, new to Miss Conrad, but which patients writhing under his knife had sometimes seen there.

"You will say good-by?"

"No; not to you." He moved slightly, after a moment, and spoke again, but still without looking up. "The word means a death-parting to me. And there is a chance though but one—that I shall meet you again in this world, with my hands free."

"And till it comes—"

"I will wait. I will not say good-by."

He turned, and without suffering himself one look at her face, went with quick steps across the fields to meet the approaching train. Miss Conrad stood quite still until the sound of the light, uneven footsteps had died away; then she drew herself erect, her dull eyes resting on the distant country station-house, and the small, gray-coated figure in its doorway, until the thundering train came between her and it, and halted a moment. When it was gone, nothing remained on the little platform but a cur yelping out of the dismal rain. She turned slowly to the north, where the long, sinuous line of cars wound through the valley. When it was no longer in sight, she stood tracing the drifting smoke across the sky until it faded behind the clouds of the nearing storm; then she pulled her cloak up on her shoulders and went into the room where Mr. Conrad waited for her.

The old man's vigil had been a long and a happy one. Margaret never had planned an air castle in her life; but the sanguine, riotous fancy of her old father had built many for her, but never one so tender and beautiful as to-night. All the red blood of his youth, all the love for one good woman that had been in it, warmed again to give freshness to his hopes for Meg. His keen ear had caught their first steps upon the porch floor. He had heard the low murmur with a broadening smile on his anxious face as he sat with both hands on his knees before the fire. Presently he heard her coming, and alone.

"She would have nobody tell her old chum but herself," the smile growing more wistful, the fingers moving softly on his knees as if keeping time to music. Such was the face he turned toward her when she opened the door. But he asked no questions.

"Come to the fire, Meg. Your hair is wet," touching it gently as she half knelt on the rug beside him, holding her hands out to warm them, leaning one arm upon his knee. Caresses were rare between them; the slight action signified much. He stroked the heavy hair, weighing it in his horny hands.

"Quite wet. What a mane you have, child!"

"Like yours," quickly.

"Yes," shaking back his Indian, black locks. "I used to say nature had run you through the same mould as me after the rough edges was worn off. We're born comrades."

"We will always be so."

"Well, well, perhaps! unless—I don't expect always to hold the first place, Maggy."

She made no reply, only leaned a little heavier upon his knee.

"Where's our friend?" in a tone which he tried to make careless.

"Gone," in her usual, steady voice.

His pale, high-featured face suddenly drew back, intent, watchful. "This was one of his holidays—"

A smile, strangely pitiful, flickered over her mouth.

"He is coming back again?"

"No." With an effort as if it pained her, she rose from off his knee, speaking in a quick, even tone, "He will not come back. He said to tell you that you knew him to be your friend. No words of farewell would prove him more."

The preacher did not speak; he drew his breath hoarsely, as was his wont when deeply moved or enraged, his nostrils contracted, his eye narrowed and shone, his teeth showed under the thin upper lip. His face always had an odd resemblance to a watch dog's: now it was that of a high-blooded hound's, panting to spring upon its prey. He sat silent for some time, his head bent forward to the fire. But passing his hand over her head, and touching her forehead, he started, the look in his face giving place to one of vague alarm. The flesh was icy cold; so were her hands when he took hem and kneaded them in his own. The girl had been hurt as never before; and with the quick instinct of real affection, he smothered his own feeling out of sight sooner than add a sting to hers. "She'd sooner die than show her own father her pain," he thought. He continued to hold the strong, white hands in his until he thought he could "act it out," then he let them fall carelessly.

"He was always a cranky, whimsical fellow, that Broderip," he said, cheerfully. "But he has been a warm, good friend to us."

"Yes," rising to her feet. "He is so still, Hugh."

"I'd be sorry to think I'd never see him again. We may chance to do it, Meg."

"There is a chance, he said. Yes."

"Eh?" sharply, then recollecting himself, he fell back into his careless tone. "What about the dog?" nodding to the tawny Russian hound that lay stretched upon the rug. "It's a vallooable present. I don't like to keep it. I reckon we could contrive to send it to him through the Ottley's. Did he speak of the dog, Meg?"

"No." She looked down at the brute's large, melancholy eyes

that followed her's, as if it kept jealous watch for its master. "But we will not send the dog back, Hugh."

"No?" writhing, suddenly. "Well, as you please. I am drowsy now, child; if you have anything to do that calls you out, I'll go to sleep," and drawing out his red bandanna handkerchief he spread it carefully over his face, stretching out his feet to the fire and folding his hands together. Miss Conrad, according to her habit, lowered the curtains and called the dog out of the room, softly closing the door after her. The old man, when it was shut, sat up and pulling the covering from his face bent it again over the fire. He had only meant to give her a reprieve alone. "It's the first time, Meg, that we played a part," he said. "We was poor actors at it."

Meanwhile, the girl, with swift, noiseless steps, went to her own chamber, turning in the half open door to look down at the hound which had followed her, and whined to go in. She pushed him back softly, and then closing the door, the key clicked in the lock, and she was quite alone.

The slow, steady rain that followed the mist shut the little farm-house into drearier solitude. All afternoon the old man paced up and down the room in his perpetual darkness, with no sound but the patter of the rain upon the windows, and the crumbling ashes in the grate. Paced up and down till the afternoon was gone and night set in. It was late, and Meg, for the first time in her life, had forgotten him, he thought. But she came at last, and in a moment the curtains had shut out the dreary storm, and a fresh fire was leaping and kindling on the hearth, and a cozy little table was being made ready, by old Lotty, for supper. When he was seated at it, in the warmth and glow, with Margaret's cheery tones ringing in his ear, he was glad to put the day that had gone before out of sight, as a wretched, exaggerated dream.

"I'll be glad to get my foot on our own sile agen," he said heartily, as they were going to bed. "People is more in earnest for love or hate with us, than here, I think, Meg? They're inside of life there, and they work away at it, and don't stand off speculatin' about it and themselves."

"I will be glad to go to work," said Margaret. Her father had hold of her wrist as she guided him up the stairs. It gave him a triumphant satisfaction to think how strong the muscles were and full the pulse, and how clear and powerful the brain above it.

"Will you now? That's healthy and brave. You've got the strength and capacity of a dozen women, and there's just that much more hearty work and pleasure waiting for you. There's many doors in the world for you to open, besides—" he hesitated; "that one that women set such store by."

He could not see that she did not answer his smile. "Yes, I

know, Hugh," cheerfully, helping him off with his cravat. "Good-night. I'll have work enough for you to-morrow. You must help pack the books, and there's class-meeting at night."

"That's true, that's true! I'll give Brother Berkett a parting blizzard on that idee of his, that'll settle him, I reckon!" She left him now, knowing that his waking dreams would be sweetened by the flavor of this coming fight. Whether it ended in victory or defeat did not so much matter. It was the wrestle that he relished.

CHAPTER XXIII.

IN COUNCIL.

Mr. Conrad found that he was welcomed in the bounds of his old circuit as if he had met a victory instead of defeat. Worldly success is but little successful with the warm-hearted, bigoted Methodists. The old preacher, blind and poor, belonged more to them than when he was the well-to-do owner of the Page properties in Kentucky. Besides, exhorting and praying, he grappled with the devil as though he were a man more skilful but not quite as strong as himself; he brought the real Christ with a turmoil of shrieks and prayers, and cries of "glory!" into their very lecture-rooms and churches. He opened up hell alongside of their daily paths, and made its most secret horrors visible as the nearest oil-well. He could have spent a year going from house to house as welcome as the old prophet long ago, whose chamber was set apart for him.

But after a few days of heavy turkey-dinners and heavier oyster-suppers, which he enjoyed to his heart's core, the old man (secretly prompted by his daughter, they suspected,) began to rebel; summoned a caucus, as he called it, of the members of conference, to determine as to his future course. There were half a dozen of them gathered in the little country parlor. Miss Conrad sat sewing by the window, gravely listening to the usual talk, half anecdote and half harangue, which her father led with his back to the fire, his face full of zest, turning sagaciously from one speaker to the other. They had made a proposal to give him a station in the conference, and charge of a small church.

"But, brethren," after a moment's pause, "Meg and I could not live on that salary. We should be in debt at the end of the year.'

"It can be done, surely, with economy," said a brisk, pale young man, fumbling his white cravat. "And I need not say to one of the oldest workers in the Lord's vineyard that we do not purpose to make worldly gain thereby."

"Besides," said an old, brawny-built brother, with a meaning

wink, "your daughter is a likely, personable young girl. She'll not be a burden on you long; and in a short time, Brother Conrad, I hope to succeed in having you placed upon the superannuated list."

Margaret, who had heard the first part of the sentence unmoved, looked up hastily at this and half rose, going to her father. But t did not wound him. He lifted his square, sallow face, turning it thoughtfully on the speaker. "Old and disabled? I'm not that, Brother Fisher. If the Lord laid this on me," touching his eyes, "he meant me not to skulk out of sight with it, but shoulder the cross and keep step. As for that offer of the charge, I hardly know what to say," hesitating. "I'll leave it to Meg," turning sharply to her.

Now, Miss Conrad was in bad repute in her father's church-membership. She sat unmoved as a stone during the fiercest exhortations; looked at the spasmodic trances and raptures of the other females without even curiosity in her face; seldom joined in the hymns. "Why should she? she was not in despair or rejoicing. Why should she sing a lie to God?" Her father hinted to them that God might some day manifest Himself to the girl in a way they knew not; her temperament was peculiar. But the brethren were obdurate. There was but one door, that of conversion; she could not climb in as a thief by some other way. Indeed, many believed that she was a female Pharoah, whose heart God had wilfully hardened, and that her day of grace was past. It was with no good-will, therefore, they saw the offer they had made referred to her decision; and saw, too, how calmly she accepted the responsibility, quietly folding up her finished sewing before she spoke, slowly, and looking straight at the oldest brother.

"I do not look at this matter as you do," she said. "Either my father should work gratuitously for God, with the right to earn his own living, or, if you undertake to give him that, you should give him enough to insure him from want. As for the superannuated list, you have no right to insult a man with charity whom you do not properly pay for work."

An ominous silence followed the words. She gave a quick glance to her father, and perceiving by the half smile and flush on his cheek that he did not mean to rebuke her, continued, as she rose from her chair.

"I have no right to interfere in Mr. Conrad's relations with his conference. But my plan would be, for him, with my help, to begin farming or fruit-raising, and give what time he could to the good cause, receiving no pay for it, and coming under no contract with any church." She went out when she had done, without waiting for any answer; a little relieved to hear old Brother Fisher's joking voice and a good-humored laugh as she closed the door.

When her father came to her, soon afterward, he was rubbing his hands with glee. "Seems as if you was prophetic in them words of yours, Meg. Here's a letter which young Maynard had in his pocket, and which he said likely bore on that farm project, and was a good opening for us."

"You will adopt my plan then, sir?" eagerly.

"Yes, I will. I've always been, in a certain sense, free-footed, and I'll do no less work on the Lord's ground for knowing I'm to get no wages for it. Some of them underpaid brethren thought your idees had saving salt in them, I reckon, Meg," with a chuckle. "But let's hear the letter."

"It is the Markle farm," she said, glancing over it.

"A first-rate patch of ground, setting aside the woodland," eagerly. "Read it, read it."

When she had finished the letter, which was an offer to let the farm, as the writer was going to join his brother in the army, and wished to leave the property in safe hands, the old man looked puzzled. "That's onprecedented low rent, Meg. I don't understand it. The Markle land ought to bring in double that. So George s gone to the army! They're fine boys, them Markles! Stock and implements, eh? And the house furnished? Do you think we can kerry it, Meg?"

"Yes, I do;" her eyes were fixed on the paper, the pallid cheeks strangely mellowing in tint as she looked.

"That'll be a snug home, and work direct into our hands. But it's an extr'odinary low lease! What's that he says about 'my agent?' I suppose it's some of the brethren hes mentioned to him we thought of locating hereabouts, eh?"

"I do not think it was one of the brethren," folding the letter slowly, while the furrow deepened in her forehead, and her mouth shut, thin and straight. "Will you accept the offer, sir?"

"Ondoubtedly! Why, don't you see the advantage of it?"

"Yes, I see the advantage."

"What d'ye mean, Meg?" impatiently. "Did you read the whole of the letter to me?"

"I read it all, father."

"What then? Have you any objections to my accepting the offer?"

She did not answer at once; stood, drawn to her full height, looking down at the paper which she had creased and folded in her hands with stern, absent eyes. Once or twice she moved irresolutely, as if she would have thrown it passionately from her; but she turned to him at last.

"No, I do not object."

"It is a very friendly offer, I take it."

"It is friendly. I have no right to refuse."

"I am glad you are pleased, child. We'll soon have a roof over our heads, then, please God."

When he had bustled out to consult some of the brethren, she threw up the window to breathe the fresh air. There had been times in her life when so eager was she to be independent, to stand acquitted of every favor given her, that she had felt as if this very air, her life itself, was an unpaid debt which weighed her down. So far, she owed no man anything: but as for God, no trained visionary in her church felt His gifts countless as motes in the sunshine, or His infinite tenderness press in and touch her with such keen reality, as blunt, unimaginative Margaret Conrad. The only sense of sin she had, perhaps, was, that she had made no return; was the consciousness of the great unmalleable power within her, unused and decaying. "If I could justify my right to live, if I had work to do that is religion I could understand," she had said once to her father.

But it seemed to her to-day as if she were always forced to be passive: helpless now, while the man who would not ask from her even love guarded her. She read the letter again: turned it over, her face varying, as if its formal business words and blank sheet were imbued with a meaning that touched her as humor nor pathos had ever done before; finally, she laid it on the fire, accepting the obligation it had carried to her with the grim, thankless reticence of an Indian.

"I have no right to refuse," she muttered. "I cannot 'hinder him from being a man, and helping other men.'"

CHAPTER XXIV.

OLD JOE'S DEFEAT.

SOUTHWARK; which means a wholesome outbreak of primitive vagabond blood on the face of the Quaker City; a corner of it which has not been weighted down by old traditions into hopeless and genteel dulness: where the wearisome ghost of Penn, the just, is decently laid: where the legends of Franklin or his kite are unknown, though old stories prevail of tropical lightnings that tore apart copper-bottomed vessels, and of storms off every known coast; for to these men, thronging in daily from all far, vague haunts of the world—from lands of ice and snow, from lands of silent, gigantic tree-growths, with centuries of rank verdure smouldered down into their hot colors and smells; from lands of vast sandy levels and flat copper sky, where the old age of the earth is seated, palsied and immovable, grim and voiceless as the Sphynx; from lands glutted and teeming with insignificant, abortive human lives; from the fresh, fair, green valleys of sea islands, which have been fresh and fair since the day when God first called them good—to these men the yesterday's antiquity of Penn and his purchase, or the flat, river-locked mass of red-brick houses, are not apt to be impressive or memorable.

They bring their own atmosphere with them; it has an ancient salty whiff of sea winds in it that impregnates the whole district: the houses, the women who never were aboard ship, have suffered the sea change: the very boys affect pea-jackets and sou'westers, and are of a general tarry flavor. There is a frontage to the streets on the river of huge ship yards; the streets themselves are narrow, crowded with sail-lofts and junk shops; there are mammoth engine factories; there are old, towering ship-chandleries and warehouses of sea stores; there are dusky little lanes lined with slow-growing gardens, whose paths are paved with shells, about low houses infested by parrots, cats of strange breeds from beyond seas, and superannuated, tobacco skinned old captains and men-of-war's men, demigods among the lower hordes of sailors, calkers and riggers.

In Southwark, facing a pier which abutted on the Delaware, was a wide wooden building, beside which, from the top of a ship's mast, a flag floated constantly during the years of the civil war. At the close of a night in the Spring of '62, its red and blue, blown

by the wind that preceded dawn, were hardly visible through the heavy shadows: shadows which penetrated inside to the one room filled with tables laid for a thousand guests, and beyond that to huge kitchens, where were smouldering fires, and meats and bread waiting to be served. But neither host nor guests were visible the great empty house might have been but a coarse temple to hospitality, where the votive fires were made to burn perpetually.

When the thick fog on the low Jersey shore began to lift, however, and a chilly light to creep through it at intervals, the far-off thunder of a train was heard, and was answered by a cannon planted at the foot of the mast.

Presto! hosts and cooks appeared, eager and ready; the fires sprang obedient into life; old men, anxious housekeepers, and tidy, fresh young girls went from table to table, heaping them as if each coming guest were a Benjamin, and had a brother's claim to welcome; the crisp bread never seemed so flaky, the yellow butter came out of its leafy covers, the red juice started from the great hams, the hot steam of coffee came in in trailing whiffs through the open door. The train came nearer and stopped, the busy hands moved quicker, and the faces were turned anxiously to the door. Only one woman was quiet: old Friend Blanchard, who had alighted from her carriage a moment after the report of the cannon, and stood now, waiting, by the stove, the red light of which fell squarely on her white hair and sharp, nervous features. The door opened, and the guests came in. It took them a long time to defile past her slowly, and seat themselves in silence at the long tables; but, as she watched them, her wrinkled lips trembled, and the tears rose to her keen eyes.

"'When thou makest a feast,'" she repeated silently, "'call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind. For they cannot recompense thee; but thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.'"

She stood without moving for several minutes, scanning each haggard face up and down the long lines, her own growing paler as she looked.

"I had not thought," she said to a young physician near her, "that there were so many ways of torturing the human body."

"These men are from a hospital in Washington," he said. "Almost every kind of gun-shot wound is represented. They are on their way to other hospitals —some of them to their homes."

"The man I came to meet," she said, her eyes still passing rapidly over their faces, "is not here. He was coming home."

"An old man, Madam? Burley by name?" asked a woman who had stopped near her.

"Yes. Thee knows where he is?"

"We have beds in a room above. The old man was exhausted

by his journey, and we carried him there. He said his friends were to meet him here. I will lead you to him."

Friend Blanchard followed her up a narrow flight of wooden steps to a small, whitewashed chamber, with half a dozen pallets ranged against the wall. But one was occupied. As her head rose above the stairs, she saw old Joe's face, miserably gaunt and haggard, lifted above the pillow. He was resting on his elbow, listening intently, while the unbuttoned shirt-collar showed his fleshless neck and the slow, laborious effort which every breath cost.

"No, I don't chew, comrade," he said, as an old fellow sitting by him proffered him some tobacco. "Besides, I wouldn't foul my breath jest now. I expect a little gal every minute—my granda'ater"—his eyes fixed on a door by which he supposed she would enter.

"It's some time since you seen her?" asked the other, carelessly.

"It's two months and ten days," promptly. "You'd better go down and get your supper, Trumbull. That coffee smells different from our cookery."

"I'll not leave you till your friends come, Joe. Onless I can bring you a cup?" half rising.

"No. I feel the want of it, too. But Rossline 'll have my breakfast ready, and I'd not disappint her," his eyes growing bright in their dark hollows.

He turned his head, and, catching sight of the Quakeress coming up from the stairs, dragged himself up higher to peer behind her, a blank look of disappointment clouding his face when he saw that no one followed. He smothered it out of sight in a moment, though, with his instinct of courtesy, holding out his hand, smiling, as she came to the bed.

"I counted on seein' you at the house, Madam; but not here. It's too arly, and too bleak a mornin' for you to ventur out. My little gal did not know I was comin', of course?"

"No, she did not. I did not even know thee was wounded until last night."

"No. I kep it quiet. On Rossline's account. You see my life hung on a thread there in camp for weeks, and she couldn't hev reached me. What was the good of frettin' the child? Soon's the doctor said I'd took a turn, and needed only careful nursin', a friend of mine (Markle's his name—Leftenant Markle) he gits me a furlough. 'You go home, Joe,' says he. 'You're as homesick for that little gal of yours as a mother far her babby. You'll never be a sound man till you see her.' That was jest his joke, but it wur nigh about the truth," with a laugh. "But Rossline didn't know I was comin'?" anxiously.

"No; she spent last night in town, and thy telegram was

brought out to me too late to warn her. I left orders to have thy room made ready, and when she comes it will be a surprise for her."

"That's so!" with a delighted chuckle. "I'm obleeged to you, Madam. It'll be somethin' Rossline didn't expect, to see her granlad, to-day! Well," moving restlessly on the bed, "shall we go?"

Friend Blanchard had seated herself placidly beside him. "There is no haste. Rosslyn will not go out to the farm until nine, and if I might advise thee, thee would not brave this untempered morning air. Wait until the sun warms it for an hour. Here is thy breakfast," turning to a lady, who came up the stairs, with a covered tray.

Joe's eyes grew brighter at the sight of the hot coffee and meat. "I'm main hungry, there's no denyin'," pulling himself up to a sitting posture. "So, if you'll excuse me, ladies"—and he fell to work, drinking their healths with every gulp of coffee, by way of atoning for his incivility.

"When thee has done, thee will tell me about thy wound, Friend Joseph?" asked the Quakeress.

Burley nodded; but secretly he had no intention of allowing Ross to know that it was her brother's hand that had wounded him. While he munched his sandwiches, therefore, he was planning how to evade their inquiries.

"Ther's nothin' to tell," he said, wiping his mouth at last, and pushing his plate from him. "I wur outside of the lines, and wur took by a stray shot. Markle, he pulled the skift home to camp. That's all ther' wur of it." When they were alone, he raised himself again on his arm eagerly. "It's an hour yet till we kin go, Madam. I'd be obleeged to you to tell me somethin' of Rossline—any little thing she's done or said. Ther's nothin' about her that I wouldn't keer to know."

Now there was an odd affinity between these two, in a something which hid under the old Quakeress' trained cynicism, and Burley's simplicity, which took him through life out of one day into another with as dogged, heavy footstep as that of one of his old roadsters. They stood at ease with each other, always; so that Ross, whose tact and insight were keen, never had even remembered, when they came together, that one was a fine lady and the other a laborer. Now, however, there was a perceptible restraint in Friend Blanchard's manner; she hesitated, hearing his question, keeping her eyes on his, uneasy and watchful, before replying.

"Thee did not receive my letter, then, Friend Joseph?"

"I received no letter," a startled look driving away the smile. "What is amiss? Is the gal ill? You did not deceive me jest now—"

"She is well; I never knew her sounder in mind or body; thee may believe me. And so full of affectionate, pure, silly fancies, so

ready with her laugh or her tears, so changed from the Ross Burley of a year ago, that I fancy at times she must be breathing some air different from ours, fuller of vigor and sunshine."

A quizzical smile crept over Burley's haggard face. "That's a curous, womanish notion. Yet I kin understand how it would grow out of hearin' and seein' Rossline. But I think, Madam, you have somethin' to tell me beyond that?" with a keen scrutiny of her face.

"Yes. I wrote to thee. I did not speak to Rosslyn before doing so. I felt that although thee never, in words, put her in my care, I was her guardian, and in a measure responsible to thee and to God for her."

Burley nodded slowly, drawing himself up on his pillow, breathing heavily, in his intentness on her words.

"I have not even spoken to Rosslyn of her danger. I did all I could to ward it off—I can acquit myself of blame. But now, it is too late—"

"Will you use plain words, Madam?" said Burley, a smothered fierceness in his undertone. "What is the gal's danger?"

"Only that which besets all women"—with a forced smile—"love. But, for Rosslyn"— She stopped abruptly.

Burley, to her surprise, made no answer. Once before in his life he had a young girl's fate mixed with his own. When he remembered "Marget" now his face grew more gaunt and older, his wrinkled lips shut straight and thin, his head sank slowly, wearily down.

"Ther's no use of my comparin' Rossline with my experience of other women," he said at last. "She's made of different clay. I beg yer pardon, Madam," remembering the Quakeress, and glancing toward her. "I was thinkin' of matters you are not acquainted with."

Friend Blanchard, who read his stupid old heart as if it lay bare before her, bowed with a vacant incomprehensive face.

"Is it an honest-meanin' man that has won my little gal's goodwill?" he asked presently in a low, unsteady voice. "Kin he give her as honorable, stiddy love as her's will be?"

"I know no man more honorable in feeling and purpose than Garrick Randolph," she replied. "Even his family traditions are a safeguard to him: the Randolphs are a good stock."

Burley moved impatiently. "Blood's a thing I don't set store by. I've always bin thankful to God that he allowed Rossline to favor them of her kin that were counted vulgar. Ef the man's got clean hands and heart to give my grandda'ater, I'd raythor he did not belong to the class as calls theirselves gentlemen. I owe you an apology perhaps, Madam," after a pause; "but it's a prejudice I have."

Friend Blanchard never combated a prejudice; she smiled, ab-

sently, her eyes fixed on her motionless hands crossed on her lap, but the perplexity and distress deepened on her delicate, thin face.

"Rossline's edication hes been different from the run of Burleys," pursued Joe, anxiously. "I've hed my doubts ef it was fur the best, but doubts wur of no use; so it is; now, if she feels that the Good Man bids her choose this young fellar out from all the world, and cleave to him, lovin' him as God loved her, I've no word to say agen it: though his thoughts mayn't be my thoughts nor his words my words. Only," and his black eye kindled dangerously under the shaggy brows, "let him take care how he uses the gal ill! Rossline's more to me than any man or woman ever was. More'n the wife an' da'ater of my youth; when they wur with me I hed other things to sheer in my thoughts. I was keen to make money then. I was keen for my Sunday's pleasuring; I liked my grog over much, too. But them things wur growin' stale when Ross come: she's took their place she's took the place of everything. It's got so now, Madam, that she's the only real live thing in the world to me, an' the rest's a sort of dumb show. If she were hurt or took from me, I think I'd crumble away, like an old tree when the sap's drawed out of it."

The Quakeress remained silent: for once in her life words gentle yet strong enough to convey her meaning failed her. Burley watched her sharply, shifting his wounded body painfully.

"Ther's some'at you hold back," he said at last, sternly; "ef it concerns my little gal, I think I've a right to know it."

"Yes. One object I had in keeping thy arrival a secret from Ross, was that I might speak to thee alone. But I find it hard to make my thoughts plain. Thee said, 'If God made these two young people for each other?' I doubt if that is the case."

"There's somethin' lackin' to the young man, then?"

Friend Blanchard's lips moved once or twice, her brows contracting with a puzzled anxiety, but she did not speak.

"Praps I kin onderstand," said Joe, with a feeble smile. "The young fellar's bin wild? he likes his glass or a game at cards? Women's hard judges when they grow old, just as they're too lax younger. I wouldn't be sartin that it wur right to separate them that true love hed jined fur that. Love's a great Gospel preacher, Madam. And the man can't be bad in the grain that my Rossline's drawed to above all others."

"Thee is wrong," speaking quickly and firmly. "Young Randolph's life has been singularly clean and pure. The difficulty lies here: that his ideas of the value of blood are different from thine —or mine. It is not the honesty or integrity of a race he recognizes so much as their age and position. He loves Rosslyn with all the strength of his nature, but he does not know that there is any reason why his education should interfere with his love. He does

not know," she hesitated and colored, "that there is any difference in a worldly view between her family and his own."

Burley set up erect on the pallet as she proceeded, the unkempt, white hair pushed back from his set, gaunt face. No trace of anger had crossed it; he looked up quiet and grave when she had done. "Them prejudices seems paltry to me: ther's nothin' in them. Hes Rossline wilfully deceived him?"

"No," eagerly. "She has, I believe, had no chance to explain. He never has formally asked for her hand; he has been in Washington for several weeks. But to day he is to return, and in this note, which I received yesterday, he asks my leave to ad lress her." She opened and gave it to him. "He looks upon me as her guardian, thee will perceive."

She was surprised to notice that the old wagoner's face colored like a girl's when he took the letter, and that a quaint, sorrowful smile came into his eyes, though not upon his lips. The love of his little girl and all that concerned it seemed to him, she saw, a thing unutterably sacred and pure. He read the letter again and again attentively. At last, folding it carefully in its first creases, he laid it gently down, covering it with his hand.

"That is true love," half under his breath. "I'm satisfied with the man that wrote that letter."

Abigail Blanchard checked the words upon her tongue, perceiving that his head had bent on his breast, and an expression had settled in his face which she could not interpret.

"I think thee would approve of Randolph if thee saw him," she ventured, at length.

"Yes, them is genooine words," absently, without raising his head. Something in the old, half-hidden face touched her painfully. She laid her hand upon his arm. "Can I help thee?"

Even then he did not look up for a moment. When he did, it was with a grave smile. "I was thinking that nothin' stood between Rossline and her good fortin but her old grandad. I never thought it would come to that."

The old lady's thin cheeks grew red. "Thee deceives thyself. Thee does not understand."

"I think I do," quietly. "I've looked for'ard to this matter afore, but it always seemed oureal to me. You mean that Rossline's birth and edication is agen' them prejudices of his? That's so. But a young man that loves her could overlook them things. They're dead an' out of sight. But an old fellar like me," with a wretched attempt at a laugh, "is a livin' fact. I'd be a perpetooal disgrace sittin' in the chimley corner with my missabul English, and talk of wagonin' and prodooce and lumber."

"Not to a true man," hotly.

"I think the man that wrote them words is a true man," calmly

"He's got his notions jest as you and I hev. An' the pint is, is Ross's life to be given up on account o' them? Wouldn't it be better for us to humor them a bit?"

"What does thee propose?"

He was silent for a moment. When he spoke, all sign of emotion was held in check, out of his quiet, resolute voice. "Ef ther's only one thing in Ross' road to bein' happy, it's best to do away with it. I perpose that you shell continue to be Rossline's gardeen, as you say he thinks you. You're a fitter purtector for her as she is now, than me, though I've been slow to see that. She does not know I have come back. Ther's no need for her to know it," hurrying the broken sentences out as though his strength was giving way. "I'll go down with Trumbull to the South Street Hospital. I'll be well keered for there. When I'm able, I'll go back without seein' her. I'll not cross their path. I'll leave her futur to you. Ther'll be a long spell of fightin' before this war's over, an' it's not prob'ble in the nateral course of things that I'll ever come out of it. That was what I perposed, ef you'll keep the secret for me."

Now Friend Blanchard, with all her sympathy for old Joe, held Ross near as her own child; here was a way opened of escape for her. She saw what the sacrifice would cost the old man. He had lain back on the pillows when he had done speaking, his breath coming feebly and at long intervals, his white eye-lashes resting on the hollow cheeks; the face might have been that of a dead man but for the resolute compression in it. The Quakeress seized eagerly upon that very resoluteness to help her. He was obstinately bent on this course: why should she oppose him? The loss would be bitter to him: but it was a manly sacrifice; besides, as he said, he was an old man, he had but a few weeks' furlough, after that a year's fighting perhaps, and then the long rest; while to her child, as she fondly called Ross, life was yet in its first morning hour.

To give him a short pleasure, must it all be clouded? must the girl go with empty heart and hand to the grave?

Friend Abigail twice leaned forward to say that she consented, but the face on the pillow awed the words back from her lips. He opened his eyes, and looked up at her dully.

"There is no time to lose," he said. "My little gal I mean Rossline may go back to the house, and by some means discover that I am here. I'll be removed at once."

Friend Blanchard rose nervously, but with alacrity. He had not asked her consent again, and somehow she felt as if the responsibility was shifted from her shoulders. "I will have pillows placed in the carriage. I will drive thee to the hospital," she said.

"It does not need. Trumbull is goin' in an ambulance. He'll see to me. She might see the kerridge, and suspect some'at. Do

not stay longer, Madam. I'm obleeged to you for comin'" He closed his eyes again wearily.

Steps were heard on the stairs, and Trumbull appeared.

"Friend Joseph," said the Quakeress, turning to him with a guilty color on her face, "will go with thee to the hospital. Thee does not leave any charge with me about Rosslyn?" stooping over Joe.

"It doesn't need," gently. "I've give her over to Him that's always had her in keer. He'll keep her friends true to her and her husband."

"Ye'r goin' to the hospital, Joe?" said Trumbull with a perplexed face, raising his voice, and looking back over his shoulder to the stairs.

"To the hospital!" There was a cry and a scurry of well-known feet across the floor, that drove the blood fiercely back into old Joe's faintly beating heart, and then two arms were about him, and he was pulled up against a soft breast, and kisses and tears, each hotter and faster than the other, came showering down all over his face and hair, and took away his breath.

"Why grandad! grandad!" she cried, whereat Joe managed with a hysteric sob and chuckle to get a glimpse of her face. She had been crying for a long time, enough to make both eyes and nose red. It did not seem to be the dainty, delicate woman whom he had left a month or two ago, so much as the little yellow-haired, freckled-faced herb-girl of long ago, coming out of one of her kinks of temper, with a threatened blow in her eyes and a kiss on her mouth. He gripped her shoulder with one hand. He had her safe: that was his sole thought: forgetting Randolph altogether.

"I did not mean to tell you I was here," he said.

"No. I suspected it. I dragged it out of Matsy, or I would never have known," with an indignant flash of the eyes at Friend Blanchard. "Some other time you can explain the plan - me," shutting her mouth tightly, though she busied herself about him tenderly as a mother might with her baby.

Friend Blanchard with difficulty hid a smile at her temper. "Thy shoes are wet and muddy," she said, placidly.

"I came into town on foot. I could not wait. It is here the wound was, grandad?" her features growing pale and sharp as she passed her hand over his side. "Doctor Broderip must see it himself, and," her brows contracting irritably again, "I will nurse you as well as the amateur hands at the hospitals. Your room is all ready, and here is your old loose coat, and," beginning to unlace his heavy shoes, "I brought your own slippers. I thought you'd be foot-sore with these clogs, and the old things I worked would seem home-like."

Trumbull had shuffled off. The two old people watched her

keenly as she worked about the bed, trembling and eager: Joe with a half-amused, half sad smile: but the Quakeress saw something more than a transient flash of rage in her now colorless face and burning eyes. She knew that Ross was quick-sighted: she saw that she had guessed the reason of the deception they meant to practice on her, and that the separation between her and her grandfather was intended to be perpetual. There was an unspeakable tenderness in her every look and touch turned toward him, which neither his return nor even his escape from danger would account for. It was as if absolute Death had interposed between them, and she herself had driven him back.

Joe got her arm in his hands, at last, and patted it, with just the old quizzical, soothing manner he was wont to use to her in her obstinate fits of ill-humor, long ago.

"My little gal's onreasonable to-day," he said, gently. "She don't wait to hear the rights of the case, or why I meant not to come anigh her jest now."

"We will not talk of it," decisively. "You thought you were kind. But you don't know your sweetheart after all," buttoning the coat up close under his chin.

Even Burley noticed the increasing pallor of her face, and that the cold, clammy sweat had wet the golden hair about her temples. She continued to arrange his clothes, his knapsack and bundle, making ready to start, talking all of the time, using old names by which she had called him when a child, and old words long ago fallen into disuse; she took fierce and firm possession of him by the right of those old days, as it were, in every motion or phrase: but she curiously avoided meeting his eye, which followed her. Claiming him, she faced her other loss.

She bent down to tie his woolen comforter about his ears, at last. "The carriage is in waiting?" she said to Friend Blanchard.

Then Burley took her hand in his. "We've gone fur enough, little gal," he said, patting it slowly in his other palm. "I'd made my mind up before you come in, and I hevn't changed it now, though I couldn't forbear the pleasure of seein' you movin' about the bed as if you belonged to me yit. But we may as well settle this matter now, once and for all."

Ross Burley stood upright, looking suddenly at the flood of wintry morning sunlight that came in at the window. Whatever spasm of emotion swept over her face was illegible to the Quakeress' keen scrutiny as words in a language to which she had no key. It was gone in a moment. She turned with a cheerful smile, stroking back his gray hair playfully.

"Let us settle it now and forever then. What is the case, and all of the rights of it? I'll not be unreasonable," with a swift glance out at the clear air and light.

The wintry daylight grew animate just then, falling about her vivid and clear as she stood looking down at him with one wrinkled, leather-colored hand in hers. Whatever had been feverish or morbid in her mood seemed to have fallen away: a delicate rose color came and went in her cheeks, the smile on her lips was fresh and cheery, the large brown eyes were brilliant under their mist of tears.

Old Joe's eyes passed slowly over her from head to foot; he raised himself on one elbow, speaking with difficulty. "Ef you could see yerself to-day, sweetheart, you'd know the reasonableness of what I want to do. When you was a quick-tempered, rompish little gal, gettin' hungry half a dozen times a day, and tearin' yer frocks perpetooally, yer old grandad could be of use to you, and understand what you wanted. But it's different now. You're a golden-haired, delicate lady. There's none of them fairer or choicer than you. You've got thoughts and wants beyond me, that I'll never understand. You've gone into another world like from mine, Rossline. I ought for to have seen that long ago, but someway I never did until some words from Madam here showed it to me to-day. I'm obleeged to her for them."

He stopped for some reply, but she made none; only the brown eyes grew brighter and steadier as they fixed themselves on his. He fumbled in his gray beard with his trembling fingers a moment.

"Things which is onnateral ought not for to be," he said. "Ef I'm in yer way, my little gal (an' ther's nobody sees that I am so clear as myself), then the time's come fur us to part. The Good Man meant me to be a help to you an' not a millstone about yer neck. I'll go back to my fellars. Don't you be oneasy about me, little sister. I'll not be unhappy; it's not my disposition; and I'll be more contented fur thinkin' I've seen the clean way to take, an' took it. First, I'll go to the hospital. I'll be well keered for ther."

She had not moved nor spoken, but with her hand on his wrist and the clear, penetrating look on his face, it seemed to the old man as if his secret soul, with the pain that wrung it, was open to her: the words of feigned calmness had come from his mouth half articulated: he moved feebly, uncertainly, under her eye.

"You will go to the Lospital," she said, quickly. "And I?"

He looked at her now, the bitterest truth oozing from his mouth. "Ther's one that's nearer to you then me, Rossline. That's nateral. I don't find no fault. I'll not keep you from him. He's comin' to-night—to-night," feeling her arm tremble, "to ask you to be his wife. I'll not stand between you and him." He covered his eyes with his hands; the hand was dry and weak—there was not much life in it. The thought came to him, which is the bitterest in life,

which comes at times into the cheerfullest old age, that his work was done, that he only now cumbered the earth, and that it would be decenter in him to be gone, and out of the way of those whom he could no longer serve. For one minute there was silence, then a healthy moist hand was laid upon his forehead, pushing his own away.

"Grandad! grandad!" It was the cheerfullest, lovingest voice in the world that called to him.

"Now hear my story." The voice was hardly above a whisper: but her tones were strong and earnest, and she stooped, vehement in her eagerness, looking into his eyes.

"There was a little girl once, an ugly little tomboy, if you will, to whom you were truer than you are to Ross Burley to day. You gave her more than food or clothes or love: you believed in her, you trusted her. You never would have spoken to *her* the words you have done just now to me. They are unjust and cruel!" the angry tears flashing into her eyes.

"Why, Rossline!"

"You do not see the meaning of what you have said," passionately. "You did not mean, maybe, to put your delicate, golden-haired lady upon a par with a savage who carries his father out for the beasts to gnaw, when he is too old to work; but you did it —you did it," with a womanish sob. "I don't know your golden-haired lady," falling on her knees by the bed and hiding her face and trembling hands in his breast. "I don't know her! I'm only your little Rossline that you used to believe in. I've never changed to you—never!"

"I know it, sweetheart, I know it!" holding her head close with both hands: for she had touched the quick in the old man's heart, and all of his resolution and reasons had crumbled away. Friend Blanchard had long since left them alone.

"And—the young man?—this Randolph, sweetheart?" in a low, unsteady whisper, his fingers stopping their soothing stroke on her head.

She raised her face slowly: there was no blush on it as she looked into his eyes with the whole truth bared in hers. "I think," she said, quietly, "I think that he loves the golden-haired lady. Some day, perhaps, he may know and love Rosslyn. Now, she has nobody's true love but yours," laying her head down again. The red blood crept up into the old man's face, and his eyes shone as if a new lease of life and health had come to him.

"So?" he said, softly pulling out the long, curly hair through his fingers. "So? I'll never be cruel to my little gal agin then. But you see I mistook: I thought my work was done."

Friend Blanchard came in at that moment. He looked up, smiling eagerly. "I've got my little Rossline yet as I thought I'd lost.

Madam, we understand each other. Nothin' but death'll ever part her and me. Shell we go home now, sweetheart?"

CHAPTER XXV.

NATURE AGAINST CIRCUMSTANCE.

"Ef you'll open the curtains, I'll look over the papers a bit, Rossline. I want to see what the boys is doin' since I left: though there'll be no more trouble in Eastern Kentucky. Garfield routed the Rebels out, root an' branch, the day of that fight on Middle Creek. I'd no hand in that," as he unfolded the morning paper.

"But you brought information as to the strength of the enemy," said Ross, eagerly.

"'T want brought, that, Rossline. The credit of tryin's owin' to a fellar named Nat, an' he lost more'n life by it. I mean," seeing her inquiring look, "he was tuk back into slavery. He belonged to—to a planter down ther," checking himself at Strebling's name. "Ha! I see the Colonel'll be promoted," glancing over the paper. "That's right! I'm glad o' that!" heartily.

Ross waited a few moments, and then seeing that he was engrossed by the news, spelling it over half aloud with his brows knit, she rose and began to set the room in order for the evening. It was his own old chamber, filled with his belongings which had been part and parcel of himself since the wagoning days. Carpet and curtains and bed were the best and warmest which Ross could buy; but the sheep-skin-covered chair which Bob Comly made him, still stood by the chimney side, the old eight-day clock with its red-faced sun rising over the dial, was in the corner, and his blackened old pipe hung from the key.

It had been a very happy day for the old man; he was at home again. Doctor Broderip had seen his wound and promised to send him back to the boys, cured, in a month's time. Ross had been close by his side, and even Friend Blanchard, finding that the ebb and flow of events took their own course without let or hindrance from her, made the best of her own helplessness as usual, and had been with him and Ross in and out, merry and gossipping all day. He had almost forgotten that it was to night that Randolph was coming; or, if he remembered it, glanced at Ross's happy quiet face, and thought it could matter little whether he came or not.

The day had been warm; the evening sun was slanting red bars of level light into the room, that struck across his newspaper. "It's later than I thought," he said, looking up. "I've talked too much to-day, and you've been shet up in this room too much, sweetheart,"

touching her pale cheek. "I'll jest look down this column, and then lie down a bit. You need not come back till bed-time, Rossline; I think I'll sleep."

She did not go directly, fearing he might think her glad to escape, wheeled the lounge up to the fire, arranged the pillows, and then parting the gray hairs, kissed him with a jest and laugh, and went out and into her own room, closing the door after her.

Friend Blanchard, who had been listening for her step, went soon afterward and tapped at the door. She knocked two or three times before it was opened. But when Ross came to it her countenance was inscrutable, its outside mask quiet and cheerful. The Quakeress never had worn before the girl so earnest or pained a face.

Ross took her hand and drew her in. "You are in trouble?" gently.

"Not for myself, Rosslyn," scanning her with her piercing eyes. "But—thy grandfather has told thee the object of Garrick Randolph's return? He is coming here to-night."

"I know," leaning with one hand on the mantle-shelf and looking into the fire. But Ross had a vein of her grandfather's stubborn pride—no trace of pain, no demonstrative blush came out on the fair, pale cheek.

"I have no right to intrude upon thy confidence, my child, and yet—I am greatly troubled for thee, Rosslyn," and tears swam in the black eyes.

Ross put out her hand impetuously, but without lifting her eyes. "You have every right to my confidence! But what is there to tell? There is a great gulf between Garrick Randolph and the woman which I know myself to be. He cannot come to me, nor I go to him. The story is told; there is no need of lamentation over it. There shall be none."

"It has not always seemed to thee that the story must end thus, Ross."

"No," slowly; "not always. But what will you have?" looking up with a sudden smile, though the smothered thought beneath would force itself through her honest, brown eyes. "All of us have some hard circumstance like manacles to carry through life, and if we take it up and own it truthfully, it loses half its shame. Some day, like Christian's load, it will fall off, I suppose."

"Thee intends to tell the truth to Garrick, then? The whole truth?" rising from her chair and standing beside her.

Ross was silent: not, however, Friend Blanchard saw, from want of decision.

"Thee is unwilling to pain me by thy answer: but thee shows little mercy to thyself, Rosslyn," impatiently.

"What would you bid me do? Common honesty makes my course clear."

"Common honesty does not demand the story of thy birth, or, in any case, the name of thy father: the man of all others obnoxious to Randolph —" She stopped abruptly. "Rosslyn! thee can scarcely draw thy breath -I have worn out thy strength."

"I'm only tired with standing," said healthy Ross, who never had known an aching bone or nerve.

"If it is only thy body that suffers, thee will be better alone." And Friend Blanchard, after herself stirring the fire to make a cheerful light in the room, went out noiselessly: thinking, after she had shut the door, that if Ross had been less strong and healthy, if brain or body had been unequal in power, she would have suffered less in the loss coming to her to-night. But she was, of all women, the type of a wife and mother in the old Friend's eyes—strong-limbed, clear-brained, with affections that had their rise with the wholesome currents of her life, and would go with it into whatever waited for her beyond Death.

Friend Blanchard sat alone in the sober-hued luxury of her own chamber, until the sun had set, and twilight began to gather gray and calm, listening for the tramp of Randolph's horse, or for a sign of life in the girl's adjoining room; but all was silent.

Now and then she pressed her finger and thumb on her aching temples with a frown of pain, and sometimes smiled cynically, inventing stinging sarcasms touching Randolph, toward whom she began to feel a curious antipathy. There were none of his absurdities of stately awkwardness, prosy talk, bigotry or priggishness, that she did not lash mercilessly to herself. When she had finished, she felt relieved, folded up her whip and laid it aside, so to speak, and, ringing for lights, took up her book, prepared to bear Ross' defeat with the philosophy which had so often helped her through her own.

The book shook in her hand, however, the letters hazed together: she laid it down, her hands falling into their habitual calm clasp on her knees, while she bent her head, again to listen. There was a silence like that of death in Rosslyn's room. The last time he came, Friend Blanchard remembered well the delicious thrill of preparation that seemed to pervade the house, coming from the heart of its mistress: how farm and house were set in order like a kingdom making ready for its lord, and Ross adorning herself, with a new meaning in her fresh face and form, as Esther was purified and brought to the king in rich and rare vestments.

There was no preparation made for him now: Friend Blanchard alone remembered to order lights in the little parlor down stairs, whose glimmer out into the night might seem to give him welcome. From Ross' room came neither light nor sound.

At last, just before dusk, she heard the far-off tramp of hoofs down among the mist of the creek bank; a slow, regular tramp.

"He rides to his mistress as methodically and decorously as to his lawyer," sneered the old lady.

She did the simple-hearted gentleman injustice. Coming nearer to the house, he drew the rein tighter, held back the horse into a walk. The end was so near! His breath clogged his lungs, the hot throbbing in his brain grew still. Passion, once thoroughly roused, as in all lethargic, cold temperaments, had utter mastery of him. Yet beneath it all,—the germ of his worship of this pure woman, and of all women in her, was the honor he paid her, the respect, the homage; far more than selfish desire to call her his own. All his life he had an instinct for that which was clean and pure: no nun could loathe a foul word or doubtful look as did the reticent, awkward scholar. Down in Washington, jostled by brazen female, lobby members, and permit-vendors, he had hid the thought of Rosslyn deeper and deeper out of sight, until it seemed to him that he had found in this innocent maiden the very heart of hearts of all the purity of life. It was as if the one white lily of the world had waited for him to pluck and hide its sweetness in his breast.

When once this whimsical fancy, which might have belonged to some troubadour's love song, grew into his brain, a thousand remembrances of her gave it consistency and strength. Her very breath, fresh as a new-born babe's, the pure, tender color of blue which she always wore, and which seemed to him to typify to the strength of innocence, touched his memory gratefully.

She was like a rare, radiant dream to him in Washington; but when he came into the same air she breathed, she became so real to him; she so warped his senses, his very reason, by the mere fact of living, that he trembled at the thought of actual contact with her, face to face. As his horse came tramping over the little bridge with the measured pace that so enraged Friend Blanchard, he was looking down at his fingers, wondering if he ever should touch her hair, touch her warm, blushing cheek with them, his face pale with the sudden, electric thrill in his blood at the thought. He was almost a middle aged man now, and love was a new passion; it terrified, bewildered him with its force.

He put his finger in his waistcoat pocket to feel if the ring was safe, which he meant to be the sign of their betrothal. He took it out and held it up in the fading light: a single pearl, set in her own color, blue. Diamonds had seemed gaudy and tawdry when he thought of her. He had bought the ring, planned their home (for he meant they should be married in a month)—planned, too, bringing her down to his own home in Kentucky, when this miserable, bloody work would allow him to bring his bird to the one nest which he fancied had been made ready and intended for her from the beginning of the world.

It never occurred to his inborn self-content that he would be disappointed.

Friend Blanchard, hearing the horse's steps coming up the road and round to the side entrance, rose nervously, and opened her own door into the dark upper passage. She was perplexed and nervous. Should she go down and warn him? Warn him of what? It was a matter which belonged to these two souls alone before God; it was left to her to stand aside.

But she listened intently until the heavy man's step crossed the porch and entered the room below; then she heard a movement in Ross's room as if she, too, had heard it and had risen wearily. A moment after, without waiting to be summoned, she opened the door, and came out. For the first time in her life, perhaps, she had given no thought to her appearance. Her tight fitting dress was the same which she had worn all day; she had bathed her face in cold water, to take away the physical pain, but her hair, left to itself, clung all over her head and neck in a mass of tangled, glistening rings. Yet, as she passed Friend Blanchard without seeing her, and mechanically went down the stairs, the old Quakeress, who had the fierce relish of a man and of an artist for beauty, held her breath. The girl, with her slow step and straight-lidded eyes, walked as if in sleep. She wore her body unconscious and neglectful of it as a half-used garment, yet never was its beauty so dominant or perilous. Friend Blanchard followed like one enchanted, step by step, watching her until she opened the door and went in to meet her lover.

"If all the sins of the world, instead of that paltry shame, had fallen on her, I would marry her if I were a man!" muttered the vehement old woman.

Garrick Randolph, who was a man, stood silent when she came in, though he had conned again and again the fit words in which to greet her. What she said to him, or whether he answered or not, he did not know; for a moment she was only a picture whose beauty, whose nearness to himself smote him dumb as it had done the first moment of their meeting. It was as novel and unexpected now. When she was seated in her usual low chair, the very framing of the picture became full of meaning to his heated brain. He had seen other young women seated by cosy fires, with books, and music, and bits of half-finished sewing scattered about, and the scene had not been as picturesque to him as the inside of a blacksmith's forge.

But this was—home.

All the lonely, methodic life of the scholar culminated in the unlicensed, hungry craving that rose in soul and body. He was not conscious that their attempts at conversation fell into short, dis-

connected platitudes, and finally into silence. While she sat, her hands clasped on her knee, looking wistfully into the fire, the big, awkward fellow bent closer and closer over her, his breath coming in hot, quick gasps to his open lips, his womanish, blue eyes swimming in tears. She seemed to him unspeakably simple and weak: before, there had hung about her a chill of self-reliance that had daunted him; but to-day his instinct told him it was gone; she was as tender and helpless as a baby. He wondered if it ever would be given to him to tend and honor her as others had done here, glancing jealously about the room. Could his love ever make that other home warm as this in which her childhood lingered and still lived with her? It occurred to him then, being tortured with impatience to utter the words which should make her his, that it would partly show to her the tenderness in his heart to tell her of the home to which his memories belonged, as her's to the old farm-house. True, he had gone over every rood of ground in his interminable talks with her before, but he did not think of that; and just then there was no time in his life when the tears had been brought to his credulous eyes which did not come vaguely back to him and mingle with the meaning of the girl's figure sitting there; for, as usual, Garrick's brain was like a slow clock, and when it should have struck the decisive hour, was clogged with the dust of all the years gone before.

He fumbled in the many pockets of his brown coat, and finally pulled out a photograph. "I brought this for you to look at, Miss Burley," he said, sitting down near her, but carefully avoiding, with his usual grave reserve, all contact between even his foot and her dress. "It is my home —" not observing that she turned her eyes back to the fire with a look of repugnance. What was his home to her?

It did not matter whether she talked or not, however; the groove was wide and well-used, and his thought ran easily in it. She understood that. She understood, too, the heat that came and went to his cheek, the liquid light in the blue eye, which was fixed on her face instead of the picture, as he pointed out the points in the landscape, mapping as it were, his life from boyhood to mid life-age. Never had it seemed to her so different from other men's, so wholesome, solitary, walled in from vice. While hers— There were oaths and obscene phrases which she had heard long ago in her stall, which thronged back to her now for the first time in many years. What if this man's pure eyes could read them in her brain! he would know the difference then! She could have laughed aloud in the bitterness of her soul. A morbid, taunting spirit possessed Ross's healthy brain for the first time in her life.

Garrick's voice was low and unsteady: he was speaking of his mother. "She set out this clump of firs to the right, here and

this copper-beech tree, so that its bronze leaves might catch the last rays of the sun. She had a quick eye for color: you can see traces of her work in all the landscape about the house—even now. This photograph is from a picture she painted of the old homestead. She painted it for me, and had it framed. It hangs in my own chamber at home."

He moved uneasily, grew silent, rose suddenly, and walked across the floor, looking out of the window a moment, then came back and stood beside her again.

"She made it for me. She gave it to me only a month before she died; she kissed me, I remember, and said: 'Garrick, when you marry, give this to the woman you love, and tell her I ask her to be as true to you and the old home here as your mother was.'"

He held out the picture as he spoke, but, though her eyes were fixed on it, she did not touch it. He laid it down, and stood, with his clasped hands behind him, bending over her. The rising night wind beat the leafless branches without against the window-pane: struck a chill through the room, her hair moved in it, the firelight wavered unsteadily to and fro. Surely she knew the words that hung on his hot lips. She had risen, and stood facing him; her lips, her very eyes, grew wan and expressionless when they met his, as if some fierce, smothered emotion within had absorbed her strength.

"I have here"—his hand trembled as he thrust it into his breast and drew out an ivory miniature—"I have here a likeness of my mother, Miss Burley. I always have worn it. It seemed to me for many years—until I grew a middle-aged man—that no other woman could ever be to me so pure, or so dear. Since she died, no eye but mine has rested on it. I would be glad if—" He stopped abruptly. Ross stood before him dumb and motionless.

"I would be glad if you would care to think that her eyes were turned to you out of her home yonder with the same tender care that they have for me. *I* think that they are. My mother—will you look at my mother, Miss Burley?"

He held out the miniature: she took it, and, quickly turning the face downward, laid it unseen upon the mantle-shelf.

"I have something to say to you," she said: her numbed, cold hands trying to chafe each other, and then falling straight at her sides.

Garrick Randolph, in his slow way, looked once and again from the girl's face to the slighted portrait of his mother, drawing his powerful frame to its full height as one who faces a blow. "You have not understood me. I had no intention of hurting you. And I have hurt you to the quick," suddenly putting out one hand as if to save her from falling, a bewildered pain in his face.

But Rosslyn drew further back. "I understand you. You

chose me for your friend once, and, as a sign of the trust you place in me, you wish me to look at this face so dear to you. But—"

"Do you think I have intended only friendship?" vehemently.

Ross' face burned crimson in her eagerness to stay him before he made his meaning clear. "You are deceived in me. I am not a woman in whose hands you would wish to place that picture. They are not clean according to your rules: there is not a drop of blood in my veins which would not be tainted—in your judgment," the red spot burning deeper with each word, an indignant light in her eyes. The hand which he had put out toward her a moment ago, he thrust nervously into his breast, an habitual motion with him. To her it meant that he dreaded contamination; her jealous eyes took note of its contour, its flexibility—the hand of an idle, sensitive man; of the rare old heir-loom of a ring he wore—

"There is a fable that all men are born free and equal in this country," she said, with a sudden cool self-control. "It only needs for you and me to stand face to face to prove the baseness of the falsehood. Every man carries the stamp of his birth and breeding as plainly in his soul as on his face: but none plainer than you and I. I have heard of equality and brotherhood all my life, but there is not a face I meet on the streets which does not bear terrible marks of the difference made in the nature of a man by money and rank and the want of them. Sometimes my caste has the advantage, sometimes yours: but the gulf is always there."

"You class yourself apart from me?" with a stunned, bewildered face.

"You are one of the class born with clean garments, whose daily air is supposed to be instinct with honor and purity, while I—"

She was silent.

Randolph stood with his head bent down: he raised his hand to his throat once or twice as if his breath failed him. When she did not speak, he said, in a low, constrained voice, without raising his eyes:

"In any other case I should avoid your confidence, but, Miss Burley, I think I have a right to know who you are."

"Yes, you have the right." She looked down into the fire, her brows knit, gathering her thoughts. She who had the shameful story to tell was quiet and grave: the man whose record was honorable, who had no past to hide, grew pale, his jaws working nervously in keen sympathy with the pain she hid, more than from his own dread.

"I have one favor to ask of you, Mr. Randolph," said Ross: "that you will make no comment on my story. It does not seem to me to call for pity. Perhaps, even it may touch you with a certain respect for me. But I could not bear respect from you,"

with a sudden movement of her hand to her head indescribably passionate and womanish.

Randolph muttered some inarticulate words. She did not hear them. "There is no shame attached to birth or position which would be degrading in your eyes that does not belong to mine. My childhood was passed in the lowest haunts of poverty; where stains cling to the soul, which, you were careful to tell me, never will wash away." As the words came from her mouth, each one seeming to drag out a remnant of her life and strength, she saw the man's head sink slowly on his hand, the arm steadied on the mantle-shelf. His eyes were hid, but the haggard want of color showed itself on his jaws and about the stern, pinched mouth. If he had showed hint of pity, it might have unnerved her; as it was, she went on slowly and steadily.

"I not only belonged by birth to the class which you place on a par with your slaves, but I worked with them. I was one of them. I believe in my soul I am one of them now. My heart warms to them more than to those who were not born hungry and ignorant. I was a market girl until I was nine years old. I want you to understand the truth. I had a stall on the public street. Whatever there is to see and hear there, which should be kept from children, *I* saw and heard."

Randolph looked up. She saw in his stunned eyes a dread of worse which remained untold.

"Rosslyn? James Strebling told me of a Rosslyn Comly -"

She put out one hand as if to cry for mercy—for time. It was a moment before she spoke; when she did, it was under her breath.

"They called me that. It is not my name; neither is Burley. I have no right to any name, unless James Strebling had chosen to give his own to his child."

Garrick Randolph was silent, looking at her; yet it seemed to him as if horrible, shameful oaths, one after the other, were rushing through his discreet, clean lips, in his dismay and passion. Rosslyn, her work ended, had turned to leave the room. Somehow, the strength and sparkle of her life seemed to have been drawn from her; her limbs moved flaccid and limp, her eye was lustreless, her very hair dim. She never had been so homely in his eyes, so dependent, or altogether a woman.

He made one step toward her. He caught her wrists; he forced her to look up in his eyes. "What is your story to me? You may have been a market huckster, or James Strebling's daughter to others. I know you as no other human being can do. To me you are the woman I have chosen out of all the world. Your father is nothing to me -nothing! I will only think God made you, and made you for me. For you love me—you love me, Rosslyn?"

She raised her pale, amazed face to his. "It is better that I should leave you," dully. "I told all; I kept nothing back."

"No woman was ever so true—so purely true," with a defiant emphasis, as if he asserted it to the world and himself, as well as her. "You bared your inmost heart, poor child! You would not have done it if you had not loved me, Rosslyn!"

In his heat hitherto, forgetting that he was a Randolph in being a man, he had been almost rough with passion; but his stately, tender courtesy returned to him. He seated her deferentially.

"I had no right to think or to say that," he said, his large figure drawn erect between her and the firelight in a proud humility. "It was boorish and unmanly to guess at your feeling until you chose to avow it. But I am only an awkward student, as you know. I am so little used to delicate and tender women. Will you listen to me," in a lower voice, "while I tell you what one woman is to me? I came here to-night to tell you."

Now if Ross had been a sensitive woman—that is, had been gifted with a morbid, thin-skinned self-consciousness—or, if she had possessed a particle of proper pride which some of her more fortunate sisters boast, she would have suspected that Randolph was urged by some chivalric notion of having pledged his honor in this course, though only to himself; she would have doubted, have paltered, have hung back, to assay the love offered to her; if she married him would have kept this doubt in her heart—a favorite skeleton—to which to resort when unwilling to accept her fate as commonplace and happy. But she was honest to dullness, Mrs. Ottley said: she never suspected a sham word or unnatural motive in another more than herself. In her heart of hearts she knew and thought herself every whit as pure as Randolph, and was as proud of old Joe Burley's blood as he of the Pages'. She had done the one task which it seemed God had set her, and He had helped her with it. Randolph was a truer man than she had known him to be. He knew all, and it mattered nothing to him. He loved her—that made it plain and natural to her.

She did not doubt, therefore, one moment, when he spoke thus, this day dawning for her; there was a quick rush of blood to her heart, a startled, searching look into his face, then she hid her own in her hands: not James Strebling's disgraced daughter: on the instant only a shy, pure girl, trembling, happy, waiting to be wooed and won. The swift rose blushes came and went on her face and neck: her bosom heaved: the soft curls trembling in the firelight seemed to wait to be caressed. She thought of how she had prayed for this hour to come, and thankful tears instead of prayers came brimming to her eyes. In short, Ross was downright, honest, innocent in her love as in everything else: old Joe's spirit being strong within her.

It did not matter to her that Garrick stumbled and muttered as he told his love: his eloquence thrilled her soul with tender triumph, whether he spoke or was silent; yet Garrick was at fault with every word: none of the carefully-conned sentences that he had prepared would answer, for he had meant to woo her with a certain form and dignity, not ignoring the social level on which they stood together, but now—

There she was, without a name, a true, beautiful soul looking through a true, beautiful body, giving herself to him. She was that, but she was nothing more. There was neither name or lineage nor kinsfolk to marry with his wife. That fact shut out to him the world curiously, gave to their compact a strange solemnity and significance. They were a man and woman alone with God.

Now Ross had always been content to shoulder the circumstances of her life as they were, but ten minutes after Randolph heard them, and while he was telling her his love, he was smothering and clothing them in a mist of poetic fancies. She was one of the orphan little ones of whom the Lord had especial care; she was Una or Truth who had come to him unstained through the mud and slough; she was the unfathered Undine who had grown up out of the foul, stagnant stream.

"I have no words to plead my cause, Miss Burley," his tones composed but his blue eyes darkening with his heat; "but I dare to say that the love I offer you is as untried and fresh as your own. My lips have never touched those of woman. If you will be my wife I will protect and shelter you with the honor and devotion of a man" (checking the word gentleman upon his lips.) "What work my brain and hands are fit for shall be given to you—God helping me." He put out his hand, the white, nervous one with the heirloom ring upon it, and Ross took it.

Took it and laid her cheek down on it; then a great silence fell upon them; a silence in which their old lives faded unreal as a past and foggy night, and in the light and warmth that dawned for them he drew her heart close to his own, and his lips touched hers. The day's trial had been fierce and wearing: now the rest had come for her. Something of the exhaustion and rest were on her face, and lingered there, even when he sat pale, his eyes glittering, holding her in his arms, her head at last upon his breast, the golden curls moving in his breath.

She rose presently, and took down the miniature of his mother, looking at it long and earnestly. It seemed to her as weak as amiable, for love is in no haste to blind us to faulty facial lines in the countenance's of our lover's mother.

"It is a sincere, affectionate face," she said, after a moment's hesitation. "She shall not be disappointed in me. I will be true to her son."

But the praise was composed and moderate, and Randolph felt a chill creep over him. It did not seem fitting to him that James Strebling's illegitimate daughter should look with critical eyes at his dead mother's face. But Ross, he saw, with a curious irritation, had apparently already forgotten who and what she was. The quiet, simple, hospitable manner which once had seemed so rare in her, struck him with a certain surprise now. There was no trace of humility in it. If he had made any sacrifice in ignoring her story, she at least did not appreciate it.

True, they were simply man and woman; equal in God's eyes. And yet—

Rosslyn looked round at him suddenly with a smile unutterably confiding and tender, and Randolph's heart leaped again with full throbs of triumph against his chest. "Rosslyn, Rosslyn!" he cried, taking her wrists in his hands. The name rang like prophetic music through all of his life to come. The man was born again: and he knew it. His blue eye laughed, his face was ruddy; he had been used to speculate on honor, on love, on hard work and happiness, peering out of the dusty recesses of his laboratory, but he never had taken them into his hold before. He was in the thick of life now: the country was no longer a map filled with air-lines, but his feet were in the sod of it, its sun was hot, its wind cold.

He drew her to a seat again, wanting to tell her this; he thought he did tell her; but the truth was, he only muttered two or three broken interjections: holding the moist pink-palmed hands close, looking in her eyes. The touch of her hand, her proud merry face, her breath that rose and fell, the very crisp rustle of her dress filled him with a delirium that was like a fine rapturous music.

Ross roused him from it. "Will you come and see my grandfather?" she said.

Garrick gave a half-conscious assent. Before they had reached the foot of the stairs, however, he was quite himself again: he was a Randolph, who had affianced himself to the member of another family, and was about to have an interview with the head of it. As to the manner of man the said head would be, he thought of it with a shudder. But he was grave, courteous, smiling, as of old.

Ross ran lightly before him and tapped softly at the chamber-door, fearing the old man was asleep. But there was a bright light in the room, and Joe was sitting up on his bed, a pile of pillows behind him, his white hair pushed back, his keen black eyes turned on the door. When her face appeared at it, he beckoned her with both hands.

"I did not know you were awake," said Ross, remorsefully, stooping so that he could not see the shy blushes and smiles on her face. But the old man lifted her head, inspecting her with no smile in his haggard, eager eyes.

"I heerd him come. Is it all well with my little gal?" He did not need an answer. He held the childish face upturned with his hand, touching the closed eyes, the crimson, dewy lips, the dimpled chin, softly with his stubby finger; a slow, quiet, tender smile creeping over his face.

"Well, well! So there's somethin' come into my little Rossline's life as 'll never go out! The Good Man hes give to her the best He had to give." He covered his eyes with one bony hand and lay silent, regardless of Randolph, whom Rosslyn had beckoned to her side. The "young fellow" was simply the means by which his granddaughter's life had been made fuller and happier; and Randolph perceived that.

However, he looked up presently, and Garrick bent his large figure respectfully. The old man's face with its frame of white hair and beard turned on him with a stern, keen scrutiny, might have been that of the patriarch Israel, he thought, so true to the truth was it.

"This is Mr. Randolph, is it?" said Joe, looking at him steadily, some moments before he held out his hard hand. Then he offered it to him. Still with his half closed eyes sounding the meaning of Garrick's. "Them was genooine words, sir, in your letter about my little gal; an' I see the same natur' lookin' through yer face. But it's ontried—ontried, I judge?"

Randolph hesitated. "I have lived a secluded and untempted life, it is true." If there was any resentment in his mind, it was not apparent in his tone.

"The wrastle comes to us all sooner or later," said Joe. "I hope for my little gal's sake you'll come through it as strong and truthful as you 'pear to me now. She'll help you. She lives mighty close to her Master—Rossline. You'll forgive me," with a change of tone, "for them comments on you -but somethin' in yer face drawed it out suddent-like; an' I'm naterally anxious about the man to whom I must give the keer of my granddarter."

"Naturally," said Randolph, with a chagrin he could not hide.

But Burley took no further heed of him; he was watching Rosslyn with a fond, amused light in his eyes, patting her hand softly on the quilt. "I allays said my little gal was born in the light of the moon," he said, glancing significantly up at Garrick; "but it's sunshine that's about her now, I think."

There was a tap at the door a moment after, and Friend Blanchard entered: her step unusually placid, her face grave, but there was a hard light in her luminous black eyes, Randolph fancied, as she fixed them on himself.

"Thee has succeeded in winning our Rosslyn?" with a forced smile, holding out her hand. "It will be a long time before thee knows the value of thy prize, Garrick," passing him as soon as

courtesy permitted to Ross, and catching both her hands with an eager fierceness and a something which, in any other woman, would have been a sob.

Burley turned, with a quick apology in his look. "You have carried consternation into our little camp, Mr. Randolph. 'S for me, ther wur many years when Rossline Lad no one but her grandad: an' it's not so easy fur me to understand ther's another to sheer in her thoughts and mind."

Randolph sat down beside the bed. He felt that, in spite of all effort, he was silent and boorish; it was the old wagoner who talked easily and cordially, trying to clear the atmosphere about them. Ross, a little dull of perception in her happiness, and Friend Blanchard, secretly at odds with fate, were silent. It was of Rosslyn, Joe talked, never alluding to the change or new home coming to her.

"Young people don't like the kindest finger laid on their little secrets," he said sagaciously to Friend Blanchard afterward.

When Randolph rose to leave him, too, the old man, with his usual tact, repressed the eager blessing on his lips on Rosslyn and the man whose fate was to be one with hers.

"I'm glad to have known you, Mr. Randolph. I'm glad this wound of mine druv me home at this time. I think I should have been glad to know you ef you'd been no kin in yer heart to Rossline here."

When Garrick Randolph rode away that night, the keen delight of his new life possessed him for the first mile or two. Rosslyn's presence was in the moonlight, in the balmy air. Then he began to recall his welcome into her family; Friend Blanchard's tolerance, Burley's two-edged criticism.

"Untried? untried?" The words had a sting of truth in them that rankled. His sainted mother, his Aunt Laura, his father, who was the soul of honor, had never warned him that his virtue would rate low, being untested. Again, nothing could be more welcome to him as a lover than the loyalty to Ross of those who knew her best. As a woman, she was incomparably beyond his level; but, no one had remembered that she was of birth and breeding different from his own or, rather, no one remembered that *he* had forgotten it. As for Burley, Garrick had magnanimously turned his back to the private's blue uniform hanging on the wall, shut his ears to the vulgar patois. He thought he deserved a little credit for this, but nobody had perceived it. "A man's a man for a' that" he had soothed himself again and again by saying inwardly while in the chamber. But he struck the spurs now into his horse angrily.

"One would have thought the Randolph was the plebeian, and the market-girl of gentle blood!" he said, more restive, as he rode further from Ross and the invisible, loving hands which she stretched after him.

WAITING FOR THE VERDICT.

By Rebecca Harding Davis.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE KING'S SONS.

"I THOUGHT you'd welcome the news hearty-like, Doctor Broderip; we hevn't mentioned the matter among strangers, but Rossline wur always a favorite of yours, and you've showed parshality for Mr. Randolph here, so I thought you'd wish them well when you heerd they'd undertook to weather the storm together."

"I do wish them well;" and Broderip, without looking up from Joe's wound, which he was examining, smiled politely, while some glib, well-turned congratulation to Randolph slipped off of his tongue.

The old man looked grave as if a dash of cold water had struck him, but Garrick, who was pacing up and down the room, smiled complacently, and answered cordially. He had blushed, a little annoyed, when Burley had brought so momentous a secret as his marriage before a stranger; but on the instant he recalled the favor which this stranger had done him; and besides there was something in the little surgeon which even to Randolph's dull instincts made it seemly and natural to confide personal matters to him. "He has no solid matter of fact opinions like other men," Randolph had dogmatized to Rosslyn. "Never talks of politics or finance. He has only his profession, and outside of that he is a woman." Which verdict Ross received as novel and decisive, as she did all of his opinions, though probably she might have arrived at the same conclusions herself a dozen times before.

Joe's wound had been tardy in healing; the bandages were not yet removed. The surgeon adjusted them more slowly than usual, Burley fancied, to-day, after he had heard of Randolph's intended marriage, remaining silent, his small pale face compressed as he bent over the bed. A soft Spring air came in at the open windows, bringing the scent from the apple-orchards and the meadows, blue with wild violets, sloping from the farm-house to the creek below. The sunshine rested on it, broad and warm, the rustle of the trees outside, the hesitating gurgle of the creek over its slaty bed, the chatter of the martins in the eaves, the bleat of the calves in the barn-yard, old Matsy's crooning as she sat knitting on the kitchen door-step, brought the pleasant out-door Spring morning into Joe's cheerful chamber. He watched the shadow of the waving curtains

on the white wall and then glanced at Broderip, trying to smother his chagrin at his indifference to Rosslyn's wedding, thinking that "it wur nateral when a man keered nothin' for wife or children for himself, that them things should seem triflin' for others."

Broderip himself, however, resumed the subject, looking up abruptly at Randolph, who, in the course of his walk, passed the bed. "The marriage will take place soon?"

"In a week—yes. If life is a storm, as our friend here says, the sooner we make it fair weather for each other the better. And there are no obstacles in our way."

"No, there are no obstacles in your way," absently, bending to his work again.

"My hands," said Randolph, in a full, mellow voice, "thanks to you, Doctor, have fitting work laid out for them. I must make a flying visit to Kentucky immediately after my marriage, to look after my old home, and then begins a long, easy journey," his blue eye lighting. "But I must go look after my inheritance."

"Yes," said Broderip slowly, as he lapped the bandage. "You are a fortunate man," looking up at Randolph, who stood between him and the window, the cheerful sunlight smiling on his broad, stalwart figure and hopeful face, bringing out ruddy tints in his brown hair and beard. "You have a wife; you have work; you have an inheritance in which your family have been rooted and honored for generations. You are a fortunate man."

Randolph bowed with a bewildered smile; there was something in the sharp, vehement tone of the little gray-coated man which he could not understand. "Coming up the river," he said, in his prosy, dreamy way, "I used to think of Rosslyn as some princess in the Arabian Nights, and wonder who would be the hero that would some day disenchant her, or rather waken Her into real life, where the enchantment rises out of our own souls, from that part of God—or Love—which is within us. I did not think that I " he stopped, looking down through the stirless warm air at the far pink vail of peach blossoms over the hill slopes, a quiet smile sleeping on his face, a womanish color in his cheeks.

The surgeon's voice rasped through the silence.

"Curious old myths those of the Arabs; but false to nature—false to nature! No wonder that we dote on them in childhood. The king has always two sons, and to one falls the princess and the triumphs; the people shout for him; the kingdom is his in the end; while the other, whom the good God made the same in the beginning, is driven out, for no fault of his own, with stones and hootings; and that is all: the story ends there. There is no alleviation, no redress, afterward. Some crack-brained old star-gazer invented the tales, doubtless. As if they could have a parallel in real life!"

"Assuredly not," said Randolph, sententiously. "Men reap only

the harvest they have sown in the world, is my theory. Even in this life, God is just.

"And yet," pausing with one end of the linen strip in his hand, "so fortunate a man are you that I should be tempted to call you the heir of the king's legitimate sons." Broderip bowed as he spoke with a smile; but Burley winced at the moment, wondering at the contrast between the pleasant, soft, hazel eyes above him, and the steely, vice-like clench of the thin fingers on his own flesh.

"I have not been without my trials," said Randolph dryly, thinking it was time to put an end to this intrusion into his affairs.

But Joe's shrewd black eye had been noting certain lines about the surgeon's set, colorless jaws, and the sharp, irregular respirations of the narrow chest bent over him; remembering, too slowly, that the man had never married. It might be that he had met with "a disappintment" in his youth. "What's the vally of them outside things? 'Taint married life as makes a mean fellar a man," he lumbered out, "no more'n money, nor family. Ther's them as gives the strength and love that wife and children would take, to the help of their fellow-men. 'T seems to me, *they're* the fav'rites of the Good Man, though sometimes they don't know Him, owin' to circumstances."

"I have no faith in a man giving up his life to humanity. The philanthropists I have known," said Randolph, hastily, "were often cold-blooded and selfish. Now, look at your Radicals, your Abolitionists. It is the abstract idea of freedom they care for, not the black man. On the contrary, there is a personal antipathy to the negro in the North, which does not exist with us."

Broderip's cool eye followed his skilful fingers in their swift movements; he nodded, but made no reply, the conversation apparently having lost its interest to him.

But Randolph continued to turn his idea inside out, according to his custom. "Why, your blatant freedom shriekers have no idea of the close and patriarchal relation subsisting between a master and his slaves. My own journey to Kentucky is partly to attend to the comfort of an old servant whom I have just heard is dying. To attend to his comfort, and to question him with regard to some family secrets of which he holds the key." For the story of the will began, like a festering spot in Garrick's mind, to thrust itself into notice in every unsuitable time and place. With Rosslyn and the Quakeress he talked of it incessantly: to others he dimly hinted it, as now. Doctor Broderip's hands paused: he half turned his head, attentive.

"An old slave?"

"Yes. My father's body-servant."

"Valuable, no doubt?"

"It is not the money value that I should regret in his death," flushing; "though, when negroes commanded a fair price, this man would have brought me in two thousand dollars. But he was worn out long ago."

The little surgeon's hands still held the ligature suspended motionless: Joe fancied that discolored blotches settled about his sharp-set mouth and jaws as he turned his face toward Randolph courteously: he fancied, too, that the unequal respirations in his bony chest were inaudible now, altogether.

"A high price for a man of advanced age," in his shrill, unpleasant voice. "He probably had some merit not usually thrown into the market; a mechanical skill, for example?"

Randolph opened his calm, blue eyes with a polite surprise at this curious interest in one of his hands. "You have made a singularly correct guess," he replied. "The man is a dexterous workman, a locksmith —was, I should say, for my aunt writes to me that he has but a short time to live. He is most anxious to see me before he dies."

"What is this man's name? Who would have been worth to you, if you had sold at the proper time, two thousand dollars?"

"I never traded in flesh and blood," said Garrick, with dignity. "The negro's name is Hugh."

Joe Burley uttered a groan. "Have a keer, Doctor! have a keer!" For Broderip, intent on his conversation with Randolph, had wrenched the wound half open with a sudden turn. He bent close over it now, concealing his face as he repaired the injury, gnawing his under lip as a man does who is angry at himself. Some time elapsed before he had finished; his fingers moved irresolutely and slow. Meanwhile the silence remained unbroken; Randolph standing by the window, chafed and irritable, he scarcely knew why. When he had done, the surgeon stood up, wiping his clammy brow with his handkerchief.

"I did not mean to wound you, Mr. Barley," he said, gently. "I am an awkward butcher, after all," shaking hands with him. He stood by the bed while he carefully drew on his gloves and buttoned his coat; then, taking up his hat and cane, he stopped before the young slaveholder, leisurely surveying him with his light, bewildering eyes.

"*Bon voyage*, Mr. Randolph. Not to Kentucky—but to the end."

Randolph felt the generous blood burn in his face with shame for his momentary pettishness. "And for yourself, Doctor Broderip? We have been temporary comrades. It is probable that the stream will run alike for both, and the end be the same."

He held out his hand cordially, but Broderip, looking beyond him, into the meadow, apparently, did not see it. He said, however,

with his usual slow, perplexing smile, "A wife, and an honorable inheritance, and a father—"

"My father is dead," hastily.

"Dead. He died, doubtless, full of years and honor; you held his head on your shoulder at the last. Dead; but you will tell your children with pride what he was. You will have children. You are a fortunate man, Mr. Randolph. But that other king's son who, for no fault of his own, was driven out and trodden under foot of the rabble, and died on a dunghill—bah, what damnable fools those old fable-mongers were! As if such things could be!"

He passed him going out with his usual long, quick strides, while Garrick looked after him with dismay.

"That man's eccentricity passes reason," he said, turning sharply on Burley. "There is the flash of insanity in his eye."

Joe rolled his head uneasily on the pillow once or twice, and crossed his arms over it before replying.

"Insane, eh? No, he's as sane as you nor me. But," he added silently to himself, "there's more in that little fellar than ever your insight'll discover, please God."

Joe was quiet that evening; talked but little when they gathered as usual in his chamber, some anxious trouble seeming to lie dormant in his small, black eye. He gave it no expression, however, but once, when Rosslyn stooped over him to say good night. Catching a handful of her soft hair he pulled it gently again and again through his fingers.

"You're a lucky child, Rossline. I seen that in your face when you wur a whimpering baby. Though you think you've had your cross to carry; no doubt—no doubt! It's feather light, gal. I tell you, ther's men I know that's bin goin' through life bound hand and foot with chains that were none of their makin'. Circumstances, like."

"I consider such views morbid. A man may conquer any circumstances," said Randolph, dogmatically.

"I doubt that, lad; I doubt. The best we can do sometimes is jest to kerry our load. As for bein' morbid, it's easy for a man to hev a healthy brain thet's had a chance at the best things in life, and good blood and an active workin' liver and digestion to back him. But he can't shut our eyes by cryin' 'morbid' to the fact that ther's other men under the same roof, maybe, whose chance wur shet off before they wur born, that they're lit'rally here beside us, like them the old church prayer talks of, 'sittin' in darkness, bound in affliction, and in iron!'"

"I presume you mean," said Garrick, with a puzzled look, "those on whom rests some stigma of disgrace from the crimes of their forefathers. Those are among the laws of society which I consider

just and unalterable. We have scripture warranty for them, 'Unto the third and fourth generation—'"

"But what if the disgrace is ther without the crime?"

"I know of no such cases," dryly.

"No. And it's not likely, Mr. Randolph, that your eyes will ever see them," said Burley, stroking Ross' hand with a quiet smile.

The next day he asked Garrick particularly about the old negro who was said to be dying. "He hed wife and children, likely?"

"His wife," Randolph said, carelessly, "belonged to the Streblings. There were two sons, I believe. One is living now, the other was sold or died in the North, I think I have heard James Strebling say."

"So the poor fellar is alone?"

"He will be well cared for. And filial or paternal affection is not likely to be very strong after an absence of a quarter of a century."

"True; I did not think of that."

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE HOUSE BUILT UPON THE SAND.

Rosslyn's wedding-day. Old Joe had decided the time and place for the ordinance, as Randolph termed it, in a few words.

"Ther's no church as sacred to an innocent young gal as the home where God and her friends has hed her in keer. Let Rossline be married at home, and in the mornin'. She belongs to the daylight. It wouldn't be seemly to hev gas-lights and false flowers and sham friends about Sweetheart."

Garrick had assented with a covert smile at the old man's absurd fancy. But he thought it most prudent that the ceremony should pass over without ostentation of any kind. If there was an evening crowd and Friend Blanchard's acquaintances came (among whom he was convinced his future wife had been admitted on sufferance), he knew the surmises that would be made and the questions asked. He could guess the politely vailed wonder in Mrs. Ottley's eyes and those of her set, to see a Randolph marry the base-born grandchild of a laborer! He knew he was doing an heroic thing, but he had no appetite for applause. On the contrary, he assured himself fiercely that he could live outside of the circle that called itself well-born; could give scorn for scorn. It angered him to see the unconscious good humor with which Ross met them. In writing to Aunt Laura Page, too, to announce his marriage he used, without

knowing it, a half defiant tone. Ross wrote a line at the end of the letter. It was her own doing "She has been like a mother to you, you said?" taking up the pen. Randolph, uncertain whether the proceeding were conventional or not, looked on with his brows knit, drumming with his fingers on his chin. Rosslyn's cheeks grew red, and her lips quivered as she wrote, though the words as Garrick read them were to him simple and ordinary enough.

But they brought the tears into the old lady's eyes; and when she sat down with her stately, agitated flutter to answer the letter, it was to Ross she wrote rather than Garrick. The earnest little message had somehow brought back the days when she herself was looking forward to being a wife, and afterward a mother; and the stooped old breast in which the milk had dried half a century ago, yearned over the girl as though she had been that one child that was nursed there once, and after a few months lay dead upon it.

But as the days passed slowly toward the wedding morning, Garrick grew conscious of a great stillness a Sabbath pause creeping over his heart, as though husk after husk of surface fancies and emotions fell off, and the truth beneath the vital pulse of all tears and laughter lay bare under this May sunshine and wind. He thought that he could read the same thought in Joe Burley's and Rosslyn's sincere eyes. He began to doubt if birth or education imported anything, provided— Then he forgot to doubt, even. They were very quiet in those days; talked in monosyllables, laughed but little. Whatever was most womanish in Randolph's nature came slowly to the light. He hung about the house perpetually; noted with keen pleasure the zealous efforts of Matsy and old John to make the wedding breakfast worthy of Ross; fingered her few new dresses, more delighted even with their sheen or softness than she. When he could not follow her about, he loitered in the sunny little dining room or in the garden, smoking, stroking his whiskers. The lilac bushes, the yellow daffodils, the horned columbine flowers of dusky red hanging over the low stone wall seemed to him strangely akin to the flowers of his childhood; sounds, scents, snatches of tunes he had whistled when a boy began to come back unsummoned to him. The world outside by day, the dusty Washington streets, or the hot opera at night, where Mrs. Ottley and her clique pored over the libretto, grew unreal, incredible to him. It was as if he and Ross were two children going hand in hand into a new country: the days, the meals he ate, were as unlike to ordinary days and meals as the manna which God gave fresh every morning to the Israelites was to bought bread.

The Sunday before the day of their marriage he took Ross to a little country church, and side by side they knelt and received the holy communion. They did not speak to each other as they went home; it seemed to Garrick that in God's eyes they were married

then; and it seemed to him, too, as if the Christ that died on Calvary came no nearer to him through the sacred bread and wine than through the woman's hand laid on his arm. He had been a "professor" since he was a boy, but to-day his hand was on the door that opened into truth; and let what crime or shame follow that would, when his day of trial came he would never lose altogether his hold. With his usual leaky habit, he diluted all his feelings into words, and confided them to Ross.

The wedding morning came.

Afterward, he remembered how unlike all other brides she was—unlike her old self—curiously divested of all ornament and of all the commonplace symbols. Now Garrick, when dressing in the murky dawn, had lingered over collar, cravat and gloves with boyish anxiety. She was so peerless he would fain do her honor in even this trifle. Then he smiled at his pale distorted face in the mirror, chaffing himself with a hackneyed bit of college Latin, which died on his lips and ended in a prayer—as much to the poor fellow's dead mother as to God. Then he rode out to the farmhouse.

Old Joe, Friend Blanchard, and Ross' old pastor were in the little parlor. The early morning air coming through the open window stirred the faint escaping fragrance of the wild flowers that filled the room—a fragrance which seemed to him the very breath of Nature, of the wet rose-color and gray of the sky, of the dewy fields, of the woman who was Nature's child. Yet, in spite of this fancy, he had a startled sense of disappointment when she entered, to find that she did not wear the Randolph diamonds that Aunt Laura had sent her, and that her dress was not the conventional white, but the tender sincere blue, which she always wor . It floated like a morning mist about her delicate, stately limbs; in her hair there were only starry white blossoms with a flush at their heart, which old Joe had gathered from the peach tree.

At least, she had the will to wear her mother Nature's own ornaments and no other. But when he held the firm light fingers in his he saw only the story told in her pale, passionate cheek, and the promise in her quiet brown eyes.

While the wholesome cool wind blew into the room, and the clear May daylight fell about them they were married. Omens of wind and daylight mattered nothing to Friend Blanchard. She "had seen many a tree planted on a fair day with canker at its roots." There was the gall of bitterness in her heart as she looked at Randolph while the few words were spoken; but the wily old courtier greeted him the next moment with a beaming eye and eager shake of the hand for Ross' sake.

As for Randolph, her gall or her suavity were alike indifferent

to him. He had mounted the highest peak of life, and all below was warmth and light. He leaned against the window ledge, his fingers playing complacently with his ruddy brown beard, as old Joe drew his grandchild up before him, and, with his hands on her shoulders, looked down into her face. They were both reticent people. Garrick could not tell what meaning in their eyes took the place of words; every feeling or fancy of his own during the past three months had been dribbled out to Rosslyn. But of her's he knew nothing; it never had occurred to him, in fact, that she might have any.

She was his: that was all he cared to know.

Joe smiled at last, as he kissed her cheeks and mouth in his old fashion. "Nothin' hes come between you and me, Sweetheart," he said. "As for what I hope fur you two, Mr. Randolph," raising his voice, cheerfully, "Rossline knows; an' Him that has you in keer. I think the day will be sunshiny—I think fur sartain it will," slowly.

"To breakfast! to breakfast!" cried Friend Blanchard.

The play was done, and the curtain dropped.

Randolph sat down beside his wife with some such book-notion of marriage in his brain. The experimental time for passion, essay, groping with him was over; he was nearing middle-age; he had gone through the heats and chills of perilous youth, thwarted the difficulties, single handed; Rosslyn, hardly won and beautiful, was beside him; he held the reins of life easily in his hand; he was already to himself the good citizen, the just master, the husband whose tenderness should never recall to his wife the gulf that he had passed to reach her. So let the curtain fall!

Joe, with his dogged devotion to Ross, and Friend Blanchard, with both money and subtle instinct as tools for her affection, having determined that the day should be the crown and flower of the girl's life, it passed for her filled with sunshine and perfume. They kept for her the delicious sense of solitude with Randolph, on the verge of the new world through which they were to journey hand in hand. But Ross had countless true lovers, and their calls of good-will after her meant much to the woman whose every step through life had been conquered. There were letters, messages, gifts: from Mr. Ottley's yellow Muller before letters, and his wife's massive epergne, to a cheap nosegay of white road flowers. Ross received them all alike, cordially, and, strange to say, Randolph, from the messages that came with them, gained a clearer idea of his wife's personality than he had yet done. The little artist, with her rare beauty, her downrightness, her simple manner, which placed her on a level with any genus of nobility, occupied a place among these people, he saw, which mere good birth could never give. They called her little clever tricks with her pencil in drawing, genius; they would have made a notability of her, if they could.

"The flowers have a curiously unpleasant odor," said Friend Blanchard, picking up the bunch of white blossoms during the day, from the table.

"They came from Scheffer's 'boy,' who is a man now, with boys of his own," said Ross. "He left them at the back door, himself, this morning. He walked one or two miles to bring them."

"Faugh!" said Randolph, taking them up to throw out of the window, but Ross rescued them with a smile.

"I give up no old friends when new ones come in," she said calmly; the common little bouquet had a meaning for her which he did not know. He did not even know what meaning the day had for her. Inside of the cordial laugh, the affectionate, helpful look, Ross' brown eyes kept their own secret. When evening came, she was passing through the narrow hall into the garden, where Randolph waited for her; the air was chilly, and she stopped to wrap a white shawl about her, when her grandfather's voice, with Friend Blanchard's, in the adjoining room, caught her ear, and she turned to go in. She meant to tell them that no little surprise or pleasure which they had crowded into the day had been unseen by her. It had been, as they purposed, the very essence and prophecy of a quiet, full, home life. Perhaps they thought her heedless of it in her new happiness—heedless of them? She was pushing open the door, when she stopped, irresolute, a startled flash of terror in her eyes. Friend Blanchard was speaking.

"Untried, I grant you," said Joe, interrupting her; "I seen that from the first. But love is a safeguard. Beside principle."

"There can be no true marriage when there is such antagonism of character and creeds. It is the house founded upon the sand—upon the sand," Friend Blanchard exclaimed. "I should have interfered at the first!" The old lady's hands chafed together as they lay crossed on her lap, and her chin quivered and shook.

"You thought him honorable, and worthy of my gal once."

"I have been studying him thoroughly since then," with a decisive nod. "The Randolphs are indolent, selfish, chivalric to their equals, cruel to those beneath them. It is the legitimate outgrowth of the Southern creed. Weak, dull, with a slaveholder's conscience—"

Rosslyn's hand dropped from the doorhandle; she went on mechanically to the porch, stopping there in the light of the setting sun. At the far end of the pebble path her husband was standing idly picking off bits of gray lichen from the stone wall. She looked at him for the first time in her life, coolly, critically, apart from all glamour of love; the unending journey through life and into death which they had undertaken to-day opening before her.

"'Bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh,'" muttered Ross with colorless lips, her eyes upon him.

The anatomist, under the mellow tints and lithe motions of the human body, sees the loathsome details within, which may never come to light, but which are there, enduring as life; Rosslyn, with the light of Friend Blanchard's words saw another man slowly evolve under her hero; the man as others saw him.

It was a noteworthy, handsome man that leaned against the wall, dressed with a finical care; inertness and sloth were in every slow motion and lounging limb of the bulky figure, incertitude of purpose in the unsteady mouth, obstinate narrow forehead and gentle blue eyes. She remembered that he was dull to comprehend the feelings or prejudices of others, irritably quick to recall his own; that it was true there were harsh discords in his voice, and that they only were used to his inferiors.

"Cruel?"

Her eyes read steadily the lines about the thin, unsensuous mouth; then they turned to the sky beyond, steadier, more resolute than before, holding their secret more firmly. Ross had gone far into her married life in that brief moment of insight. She had looked through the mystical angle, which, once in life, according to the old superstition, is held before the eyes of every man and woman, and beyond which lies the second sight.

But what she saw there, whether weakness or crime, she told to none, not even the Master whose face she sought in that quick glance upward.

Randolph seeing her in her white drapery, through the red evening light, made a step forward, and called to her with a passionate gesture of welcome. She waited one moment folding her arms across her breast. It was as if she had looked down into her own heart, and had seen its possibilities for temptation and for fall; yet not for herself would this heat have kindled her eyes, or the unutterable tenderness have throbbed in her full veins.

"I know him for another man than they know him—a nobler, better one," she said.

It seemed to her that He who looked into the hearts of Judas and Magdalen alike, with clear, loving eyes, came between her, with her shameful past, and this man, with his unknown future, and laid His hand on each.

Gathering her shawl about her, Ross went down the path to meet her husband with a quiet step and a light in her face which was new to Garrick's eyes. He drew her down on the seat of the little summer house, about which the vines were thrusting out their apple-green leaves and red buds, and, stooping closer, looked anxiously into her face.

"What is it, Rosslyn?"

"I was thinking of a house against which the winds beat and

rains fell, but which fell not, for it was founded upon a rock, and I thought of our married life, Garrick."

He touched his lips to hers with an uneasy smile, while a startled doubt filled his mind for the first time, if all that had gone before were not but the prologue, and that only now had the curtain risen and the play begun.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE HONOR OF THE RANDOLPHS.

Aunt Laura Page thrust Randolph into a worn, leather chair beside the fire: his father's chair, he saw with a shiver, that grew out of the excitement of his home-coming. The old lady kept her hands on his shoulders, her thin little frame shaking with tears and hysteric laughs. The rich silk had given place to a plain woolen gown, but the diamonds still sparkled in her ears and on the wrinkled hands; her eyes had a hard, goaded look, and her face was pinched and bitter.

"We have had hard work here, Garrick," whimpering. "But no matter; tell me about your wife. You left her the week after you were married? To come to me? That was kind."

"I had another reason for coming," said honest Garrick. "There were too many dangers in the way to bring Rosslyn," blushing boyishly as he named her. "Eh! Viny? and Cole? Where are you all?" going to the door, as a crowd of black faces appeared in the hall, shaking hands on one side and the other, with a hearty glow in his face, remembering how different was this cordial patriarchal relation between himself and the negroes to the servile hired labor of the North.

When his supper was brought to him and he sat eating it, Aunt Laura, with a woman's keenness in minutiæ, took note of a change that had come to him. His features were compacted, his eye assured; his voice had a clear, decisive ring in it; his step was heavier, his sentences smacked of everyday life, not books. "He has been among Radicals," she determined. "No doubt he is tainted with infidel notions."

When they were alone, she filled up the evening with the family history since he had been gone. The Pages and Randolphs had suffered innumerable losses in the war; the young men were all on the Confederate side. She had the record of each ready for him. The instinct of the clansman was strong in Garrick. Listening, the little wife he had married in the Jersey farm-house, with her queer surroundings of Abolitionists and laborers, began to fade in spite of him into the background. Not less dear, but more unreal.

The *patois* Aunt Laura used, the names, every one of which recalled some train of association rooted in his boyhood, her opinions, the creed on which they were founded—these were his native language, after all. It was the Nile oarsman coming safely back into the warm, narrow rim of his boat, to his droning sing-song, to his eternal Alla il Alla, after a plunge into the cold and doubting North air. The new ideas which he had caught from Ross and her friends were true, perhaps, but they were raw and unaired to him. There was an indescribable sense of content and actuality as he sat with his hands on his knees, lending an attentive ear to Aunt Laura's stories as to old, well-known songs, in settling down into the narrow, warmed, familiar limits of thought and belief.

There was so much in Ross' antecedents to conceal, that he avoided her name as dexterously as he could; and, despite the old lady's kindly feeling toward her, the burning of "sister Lucy's house on the James," or the escape of "George Page's negroes," were naturally more interesting than a woman whom she had never seen; so it came to pass that Rosslyn (who was, just then, sitting sewing by her chamber lamp, her few ideas centred into one, blushing and smiling to think how Garrick doubtless was describing her to-night to her new kinsfolk) was suffered to glide unmentioned into the background, a beautiful visionary figure to whom this air was alien. But Pages and Randolphs here in this old clan house of the family were solid, corporeal, and at home. More than any of them, the image of his father.

Sitting in the chair which always gave to him the sense of heirship, with the consciousness full upon him that he had come back to right some vague wrong to his father's memory, Garrick looked up again and again at the shrewd, benevolent face above the mantel-shelf, feeling it grow more alive with each moment, and come with the force of actual presence into his daily life; for the man from whose being he had sprung held yet a deeper hold on the real sources of his nature than his bride of a week.

It was late in the evening before he summoned courage to approach the subject he had at heart.

"I must see Hugh to-night," looking out through the window at the scudding night rack across the sky.

"Hugh?" absently. "O, the man who was so urgent for you to return? No matter, dear boy. He is a half-witted, ill-conditioned old fellow. He is well cared for. You shall not vex yourself. Murdstone has seen him."

"Why, Murdstone?" looking up startled. "He seldom will prescribe for the people."

"No. But this Hugh had some whim that his life was important—that he had business with you. Doubtless, a ruse to insure attention."

Garrick rose, losing color. "He had communications to make to me?"

"That was his story. But there is no haste; Murdstone said he might live for years, if well taken care of. He deserves that. He has been a useful fellow in his day, though both deaf and dumb, as one may say."

Garrick stood with his hand on the back of the chair, looking up furtively, as she spoke to the pictured face on the wall.

"This man was a favorite of my father's, I have heard?"

The old lady's pale eyes shot a quick suspicious glance over her spectacles. "His body-servant," dryly. "Is the want of proper assistance much felt in the North, Garrick?" changing her tone.

"There is something held back from me about this man," shuffling his whole body impatiently. "There is a story of a will, whether trumped up by malice or true, I do not know; but I came here to sift it to the bottom. If my father's honor were called in question, it is my place to right it. It was unjust and cruel to conceal it from me."

The angry heat rose to her face; her thin eyelids began to flutter. "Who threw imputation on Coyle Randolph's honor? Who has done it to you, Garrick? Do you think I would have kept it secret to guard your life, boy, if your father's good name had needed defence? Do you think I would?" her weakly lined face growing intense and significant.

"Why was the story hid from me, then?"

"It was a matter full of pain and disgrace—the quarrel between your grandfather and his son. It was Coyle's wish that it should be forgotten. Was that unnatural? There was no proof that the will ever had been preserved after the first angry heat in which it was drawn."

"If it had been?"—

"You would have been without fortune, Garrick; but no less a Randolph," proudly.

"Without fortune? A beggar!" vehemently. "I do not find that the Randolph blood weighs heavily in the world's scales without money."

Aunt Laura drew herself stiffly erect, with a look of grave surprise, but made no answer.

"Not only without fortune, but the Randolph property would have belonged to James Strebling or his children," with a bitter scowl never seen on his face before. For, with the ingenuity of self torture of a morbid man, he had secretly pondered the probability of Ross' ever becoming co-heiress with Robert Strebling of her father's money. He had heard the story of the long ago visit; had learned to understand the tenderness in Strebling's tone when he talked of "Rosslyn Comly;" it galled some passions within him

to life which no man ever had suspected in the gentle scholar; the shame which Strebling had given to his base-born child he could forgive; but the tenderness—never!

Aunt Laura patted her fingers together, dismayed at the causeless white heat of wrath in his face. "There is no need to vex yourself, dear boy," coughing to gain breath. "There was no will. You can assure yourself of that from this negro Hugh. He was your grandfather's man at the time of his death."

"Where can I find him?" pushing the chair from him and taking up his cap.

"To-night? He is lodged over the tool-house, as usual. But there is ample time. He may live for years, with care. One wonders indeed, sometimes, why such useless lives are preserved—poor wretches! You will go to-night? Good-by till morning, then, Garrick. My nerves are all unstrung," and the old lady pressed a dry kiss upon his forehead, and went hesitatingly away with her little minuet step, and feebly sad face.

Garrick Randolph did not go out at once. He stood on the hearth-rug, his hands clasped behind him, looking up into his father's eyes. The painter had caught their expression aptly; they were controlled, concealing; he knew that when he was a boy, scanning, as a child does, the faces near him. Some thought hid suddenly out of sight in them whenever they turned fairly to another face.

What was it that Coyle Randolph had to conceal? His son, staring straight at the daubed canvas, told himself that no life was whiter, that it had been even weak through its palpable effeminate purity and talk of sentimental honor.

He told himself this, and then he went to the sideboard and gulped down a glass of brandy, his teeth chattering with a sudden faintness and nausea.

The healthy night air partially restored him to reason. He laughed at the fancy that his fate depended on a visit to old Hugh's crib, where he used to go when a boy to have his tops mended. He was making himself the hero of a melodrama! He went up the ricketty ladder to the loft with something of the comfortable sense of mastership returning to him, and pushed open the door after a tap on it. The room was familiar and commonplace enough. There was the negro's wood-heap in one corner, and his cot in another; a tallow candle and a plate of rice, boiled with flitch, on the table; a brown and yellow jug of tea simmering on the brick edge of the grate. A foxy little cur was staring into the fire squatted at the old man's feet, who was rubbing one bare, swollen leg without wincing, though the pain brought out clammy drops over his forehead. Hugh's words had been sparing through life.

"I'se glad to see you, Mars' Garrick," quietly turning his head, then rising to drag a chair over the floor.

"You've been ailing, Uncle?"

"Yes, suh. Doctor Murdstone, he say dat I chance fur some years yet ef I stay in-doors. But I don't know."

"Of course, of course," heartily. You shall be well nursed, Hugh. You wanted to see me for an especial reason?" his voice changing in spite of himself.

"No, suh; no, suh," stooping over to tie his shoe. "It's not dat p'ticlar."

Garrick was used to the shuffling habit of the negroes. "It was a mistake, then," carelessly snapping his fingers at the dog.

"Dere *wur* one matter dat I counted on mentioning, dough it wurn't of no account, special. I tought I'd like—'s I wurn't of no use hyar—to hev my free papers fur dis time as 's lef to me."

Randolph drew a long breath, and laughed nervously as if a sudden weight had been lifted from his heart.

"You have the hobby of your people, eh? What could the name of freedom be worth to you, Uncle? You have all you want here. Though you shall have it," hastily. "I did not mean to refuse it to you."

"No, suh," patting the dog's yellow hide slowly.

Garrick, who liked to give favors and to be thanked for them, looked up sharply at the old man's quiet indifference.

"When kin I hev dem papers, sah?"

"To-morrow."

"I'se at liberty den, to go and come whar I please?" his hand stopping short while, without raising his head, he waited for the answer.

"Do you want to leave the farm?" coldly.

"I'se 'ill leave um. Yes, suh. I'se hes all I want hyar; but I hed two boys when I wur a young man, an' I'd like to see dem uns wunst 'fore I'se put by."

"You are going to the Strebling place?" with quick suspicion.

"One ob dem lads am dere," slowly. "You needn't be 'feerd to trust me by'm Mars' Streblin'," with a meaning laugh.

Garrick's face sharpened with some emotion which he strove to hide. "I have been over hasty in promising you your freedom, perhaps," he said, hotly.

Hugh turned on him the grave, quizzical old face framed in its white wool of hair and beard. "I'se not bin hasty in askin' dat ar den. When you was knee-high to me, Mars' Garrick, ole Mars, he bid me remain long ob you till you wur of age. 'He'll give you your free-papers den,' ole Mars' said."

Randolph laughed incredulously.

The old man stiffened his little, wiry body. Ignorant and dull as his face might be, it had in it a quiet self-respect which checked Randolph's sneering laugh. He rose and hobbled over the floor to an old tin chest, unlocking the padlock and taking out a sealed, discolored letter, which he carried over and laid beside the young man. "De man what wrote dem words knew what I was wurf," he muttered, as he sat down again, putting his hands on his knees, looking in the stove, averting his eyes from Garrick.

Randolph took up the square letter, sealed with wax and smelling of onions and tobacco; the first glance had showed him his own name on the back in his father's writing. He turned it over slowly, not looking at it again after that.

"I know you are to be trusted—you were my father's friend—I am hardly myself, to-night—" the sentences falling mechanically from his dry lips, the pupils of his eyes contracted as he looked into the fire.

He was gaining time.

The old negro heard at last the wax break, and the rustle of the paper as it was opened; but he did not turn; sat rubbing his skinny hand over the dog that he had taken up on his knee, the far-off, back-looking expression in his hazel eyes common to every man, black or white, who has led a silent, solitary life. Once, at some inarticulate sound in the corner where Garrick sat, he half rose, then sat down again, nodding his head, and mumbling to himself. Nor did he look up, although half an hour elapsed before the young man got up and, coming to the stove, stood before him. The letter was not in his hand. There was no agitation in his manner or face, but even to the old man's quick, furtive glance, the whole man bore a shrunken, conscious look, like one on whom had fallen some moral leprosy. His voice, however, beyond its ordinary tones, was loud and arrogant.

"You did my father a service? He tells me—it is in this letter—"

"I tought Mars' Coyle ud make it plain in dem words," quietly. The old man's face was a mass of wrinkles, but the hazel eyes looked steadily out of them. Garrick's fell before them. "He giv his word to me, and ole Mars' was an hon'able man, although—" He stopped short. The blue eyes in the colorless face before him flashed up at him like a tiger's about to spring, and an almost imperceptible shudder crept over the young man's whole body; but he held himself down, and after a moment resumed, cool and grave,

"You know what is in this letter, then?"

"I know what dem words hint at. Mars' Coyle said: 'My son, (which is you, sah), 'my son,' says he, 'will understand. No one else.'"

There was some dormant hope,chance in Garrick's mind of a

forgery, an impossible idea such as would float in the fogged brain of a half-maddened man.

"Why did he give that to you?" he said.

The negro hesitated, shuffling his heels, his stubby black fingers working in his white, broad shirt-collar. "He said, twas to make shore dat you'd gin me dem free papers. He knowed all I could tell, ef yo did not. But I'se 'd be slow to think Mars' Coyle was 'feerd of Hugh," shaking his head. "We once wur lads togedder, yo see; campin' out 'long de Cumberland, bar huntin', for months by de time. Come he wur growed, 't wur me dat helped him in dem scrapes at collidge ob dicin' an' drinkin' to hold it dark frum de ole man. I tink Mars' Coyle nebber 'feered ob me."

"You have been leisurely in claiming your freedom, considering on what ground you ask it." Randolph took out his handkerchief and passed it over his dry, parching face. He wondered if the insanity which was said to lie latent in every man had come to him? His soul and body were on fire with something akin to thirst, and it seemed to him as if nothing but the life of this black wretch could quench it.

The old fellow looked up bewildered. "Yo mean I'se bin slow 'bout dar ar. Jest so. I'se tought on gwine year afer year. Dar's dem cullored folk as it hev took dere freedom and hev bought dere sons'. But I'se not got dat much ambition. I'se no great hand fur strokes of work. But I'se 'd like to see dem lads—Nathan an' Sap—" a smile coming on his face.

Randolph was silent, looking down on him with speculation in his eyes.

"But I'se 'll not delay no longer, I reckon, suh. I'm bound to see dem soon, or nebber till we're crost dat wide riber. De horn's blew fur night wid me, Mars' Garrick."

Garrick rubbed his large white hands in one another as he held them clasped behind him. "How soon can you travel?" he asked, clearing his throat.

Hugh laughed. "'Pears to me, suh, 's I could go to-morrow, when I tink ob seein' dem dere lads agin. Dough it'll not be easy leavin' de ole place."

He looked up for an answer, but his master's eyes were turned vacantly on the floor. A negro's and a child's instincts are keen: *this* was not the man who had been willing to camp and track with him, whose gambling and drunkenness he had smothered over.

The old man stood up, jerking out the shirt-collar further. "I'se perceive yo don't put confidence in me as Mars' Coyle did, suh?"

Randolph laughed—a false, artificial laugh—but made no reply. He thought he saw the wily old schemer's plan clearly: to trade this knowledge of the will he and his master had destroyed to James Strebling, to gain therewith his son's freedom. He was not

too lazy for *that* stroke of work. And though the will was gone and the testimony only a negro's, the Streblings would buy this story at any price. What did it matter? The property rightfully belonged to them. To-morrow, Randolph would give it over—if he were an honorable man. The property, and the honor of his father. Already he heard young Bob Strebling's ribald sneer at the mention of Coyle Randolph's name.

"I will leave home—this place, to-morrow: for Mr. Strebling's plantation. You can go with me. One of your sons has remained there, I think."

"Tank yo, suh. Yo don know which, suh?" knuckling his forehead humbly.

"No."

"No, suh. 'Twouldn't be likely as yo would. I'se 'll be ready, Mars' Garrick."

There was an eager servility, new in his manner, since Randolph had thought his sons worth mention.

"Be ready, then, by noon."

Hugh scraped and bowed and smiled, but elicited no response from the pale, controlled face before him. "I kin do nothin' fur yo furder, suh?"

"No."

Yet he stood a moment, looking at the wrinkled black face grinning out of its fringe of white wool at him. The passion had faded out of his own quiet, melancholy eyes. It seemed to him now simply pitiful that a thing so mean should have power to deal him a mortal blow; a blow that had wounded the dead in their graves.

Turning to leave the loft, he glanced back into it; a shed with the barest shelter, food and fuel in it that would support life; and that life? Of how much more value was it than the cur's that lay gnawing his bone before the fire? To Randolph's philosophic eye, a negro had always been a necessary part of the world's machinery of labor; fitted to the Southern climate as the draught horse was to English mining sections, or the light mustang to the Western flats. Providence was wise in such adjustments. But when one of these tools, with the passions and appetites of an animal, thrust itself up into a man's path to foul and balk it—what then? The wrong done him was, in any case, hard to bear, but the inherent difference between the race of the negro and his own made it galling beyond endurance.

There were men who would not scruple to work their field-hands to death in a given number of years, as a matter of sheer economy, regarding them simply as producing power. One of such men would soon dispose of Hugh. He could not go so far as that—.

Though if the negro were dead, Coyle Randolph's name would

still be pure; and he need not give up his grave yonder, to-morrow. There was no evidence but the old man's word.

Hugh stood shifting from one ragged foot to another. "It am a long journey 'fore we reach Mars' Jeems Streblin's, sah?"

"Yes." There was a close, penetrating look in Randolph's face, the meaning and motive of which fell outside of the negro's brain; he stood irresolute a moment, then, with a grave nod, turned and went cautiously down the narrow stairs into the moonlight below. The old man followed, looking down after the athletic, daintily clothed figure, and scholarly head, as they disappeared, making a motion, once or twice, as if he would have called him back. But he suffered him to go, listening to his steps on the tan-bark path below until they reached the house. Then he went to his wooden box, and taking out a woman's dirty calico needle-book drew from it a slip of yellow parchment.

"He didn't ask me fur de will, an' 'pears like I couldn't vex de young fellar no furder," looking at it with his head to one side. "Dough I see he tink me a cussed ole liar; an' I'se serbed him faithful 'bout dis ting dese many years. But I'se 'll keep it fur him; I nebber seen him favor his father like to-night; an' he's jest married, I'se 'll not be hard on de young man," folding up the paper and restoring it to his hiding place, with a dozen nods.

He covered his fire, blew out the candle, and whistled the dog to their joint bed of straw on the floor. But presently he sat up with his hand on the sleeping cur, staring restlessly into the smouldering embers. He could not sleep for thinking of the two lads he was going to see; he could not force himself to understand that they were men, and not the scrawny, bright little yellow shavers whose tom-boy tricks used to fetch the hot blood tingling to his finger ends with delight. He would only find one of them at the Streblings'; he wondered which? But he could go look for the other —being free.

He got up and began to set aside his miserable little belongings in lots to give away in the morning; the table for Viney, the chair for Sue, the candlestick for one, jug to another; such matters would count in the cabins. The old fellow went about it chuckling; he never had had a chance to be generous before, though the chuckle broke down now and then into the sobbing whimper of old age; for with all his morose silence, Hugh had the clannish, absorbing affections of his race; the twenty negroes, old and young, who had been born and grown up about him, seemed to him, to-night, each one part of his own flesh and blood.

After he had divided and re-divided the rubbish, he examined his clothes, which were patched, but clean, pulled out his broad white collar with satisfaction. "I'd like to make a 'spectable 'pearance 'fore de lads," he muttered.

He tied up a small bag of meal and another of rice, which he had been saving for weeks out of his rations. "'S likely dat'll hold me 's long 's I'se widout work," looking at them reflectively. "I'se don't want de boys to tink dere father's come to hang round, a no-account free nigger. I'se 'll not go empty-handed." He put the bags side by side, and his brimless old felt hat beside them on the table, at first with a smile. Then he stopped and looked at them.

"I tink de Randolph 'state owes me dat much," he said, a sudden change coming into his face.

Out of his long life of patient and not unskillful labor, he had brought—*that;* his ragged clothes, his brimless hat, the rations he had stinted out of his daily meals. Perhaps Master Garrick would give him, when they parted, a five-dollar bill. He squatted down again looking in the fire. If he had been born white, with a few years' teaching at the common school, he would have been now, most probably, a master mechanic, under his own roof, children and grand-children about him, taking his part in politics, having his word in church and town matters, a man of standing and name.

"I'se wurn't a hard worker, but I'se hed a knack fur nice jobs. I'se brought in hunderds a year to Mars Coyle, down in de mill dar," he said. "An' I'se brought nuffin but dat yonder out wid my gray hairs to take to my boys."

A strange look gathered into the face of this tool of Randolph's, whose place in the economies of labor had been so aptly adjusted by Providence; an expression such as Coyle Randolph had met there once before, when, years after Hugh had been separated from his boys' mother, he had told him to choose another wife.

"I tank you, Mars," quietly looking up from his saw. "I'se neber bring anoder man child into de world to be a slave." Coyle Randolph wondered dully if it had hurt the man to take wife and children from him, but thought it best to ask no further questions; and Hugh had made no complaint. But he kept his word.

During the night the old man rose two or three times from his uneasy sleep to rearrange his bags, and look out impatiently for the tardy morning. When, at last, it dawned, he took the will out of his box, secreting it in his flannel shirt, and then, from another hiding-place, drew out a necklace of small, dark blue beads with a gilt fringe, which he held up admiringly in the dim light, polishing it with his sleeve.

"Nathan and Sap ud be glad to see somefin' dat de ole woman wore," folding it up. "I kin tell dem lads it was a moughty true heart to dem an' me dese beads kivered," and then whistled to his dog and stirred up his fire for the last time with shaking hands and a feeble chuckle.

Randolph, going into the house the night before, had seated him-

self with a cigar to quiet his nerves, turning his back to the face looking down on him from the wall. The lamp burned low; he trimmed it, and took up a pile of letters which Aunt Laura had left for him to read; letters from the cousins and uncles who were, without exception, fighting on the Confederate side. Garrick read page after page, blank of meaning to him, conscious only of a stunning pain in his brain, which no cure, he thought, would ever touch. He thrust one scrawl after another in its envelope, dully wondering why he, rather than any of these feather-brained boys, should have been condemned to this test of to-night; to beggar himself with the same word that declared his father a swindler. He, who had kept morals and honor so jealously pure.

At that moment he opened a large blue sheet, covered with his uncle John Page's bold characters. John Page was the head of the family. His own name caught his eye. "I did not blame Garrick for espousing the Federal cause. Whatever he does is prompted by an honorable motive, however mistaken. He will do no discredit to his family on whatever side he fight. Coyle Randolph's name is safe in his son's keeping."

Garrick laid down the letter, a boyish flush on his face. "Very fair in Uncle John, very fair. But he was always a just, moderate man, with a keen appreciation of character." His eyes rested on the words, "His father's honor would be safe in his keeping." They seemed to him more than a coincidence. Save it? How could he save it? Yet nothing stood in his way but this negro's life.

Mechanically glancing over the page, another sentence startled him into consciousness.

"We need laborers, and at once. Of course, Garrick having taken the course which he has done, his people are not available; but if any of the planters will forward able-bodied men to the government agent in Rogersville, they will be credited and amply paid for their services. The agent will return to Georgia on the 4th. Try what you can do for us. Sales may be made permanently, if preferred, and, *entre nous*, that would be the most prudent plan for the owners. The men are to work on fortifications and railroads, and will not be worth a great deal when the contractors have done with them."

Randolph held the letter a moment. Then he let it fall as though it stung him, and began to walk unsteadily up and down the room, even that motion seemed to irritate and excite him, and stopping by the window, he drew the curtains behind him to shut out the peering light of the lamp, and remained alone motionless until late in the night. Then he came out with his usual composed step, and selecting John Page's letter from among the others, folded it carefully and placed it in his breast pocket.

The time of departure was altered the next morning; instead of noon, they set out immediately after breakfast. Mr. Randolph did not appear until the carriage, horses and negroes had been waiting in a breathless state of impatience and excitement for an hour. Every little black urchin on the place had assembled to see old Hugh off; the older members of the party held a grave consultation about him on the stable door. He had deposited his bags under the seat of the carriage; his gray wool was combed to the extreme of stiffness, the clothes brushed again and again. Aunt Laura had sent him out a bundle of tobacco and a bank-note, and Hugh, in his delight, had forgotten all his morbid notions of the night before. He was adorned, too, with a red cravat which Viny had presented him, and his black hands were thrust into a pair of kid gloves with gaps at every finger. Just before Garrick appeared, too, Cole hurried out with a pair of half-worn shoes.

"Dey'se stouter dan your'n, Hugh; I want to swap. Dey'll look more 'spectable to dem Streblins."

So that it was with a certain self satisfaction under his shaking hands and distorted smile, that Hugh presented himself to Randolph ready for departure, hoping through all his trouble at leaving the old place, and plans about "the lads" that his master would approve of his finery as presentable. But the young man was unusually brusque; passed through the bowing and grinning crowd without notice, buttoning his coat nervously, a cloud in his stern blue eyes; and when Hugh, after a final chorus of good-byes and wrenches of the hand, scrambled up in front, he carefully averted his eyes from him with a look, the old man fancied, of disgust. Turning the corner by the mill, where the house was lost to view, Hugh nearly dislocated his neck in waving his ragged handkerchief to the group at the front door, and then settled himself with a choking sob in silence. He did not know if it would need a day or a week to bring them to their journey's end, and to the boys; but he asked no questions after a glance at the pale, resolute face behind him.

It was near nightfall of the day following when they drove up to the depot in Rogersville. In an outer room of the station there were crowded about fifty negroes, all men, some of them laughing and joking; a very few hobbled.

"Dem's missebul slaves, goin' down to Georgy rice fields," thought Hugh, with the new pride of freedom strong in him, as he lumbered along behind Randolph, his sacks under his arm.

"Wait there, Hugh," nodding to the negroes. "I must leave you here; I will put you under a gentleman's care."

"All right, Mars'. Is it—is it far to Mars' Streblen's?" hesitated Hugh.

But Garrick passed on without answer. A lie stuck in his throat.

The old man sat down humbly apart from the white men grouped around, and just as far from the rough negroes. The engine, with its fiery-red eyes, was shrieking up and down the platform. His master came out presently with a wiry, hook-nosed little man, who scanned Hugh keenly as he passed. Then Hugh saw them enter the little office, and, going to a desk, exchange papers.

"It's my free papers, I reckon. Dat's all right, I s'pose; Mars' Garrick knows; dough some how I'd rather have had dat in my own hands."

The whole black monster of a train, an object of mortal dread to Hugh, moved mountainously up in front of him; and in a moment, how, he hardly knew, he found himself hustled with the whole black and white crowd on board, and caged in one of the narrow dark cars. Looking out of the window, he saw Garrick in the twilight standing talking to the sharp looking trader, drawing his glove off and on nervously as he held his hands behind him. The few lamps glimmering dully on the platform made the night, the moving train, the wild shriek of the engine, more dreary and desolate to the old man's frightened eyes. He managed to thrust his black face out of the car window, and beckoned desperately to Garrick, nodding, with a miserable attempt at a laugh. "You'll say good-by, Mars' Garrick, shure?"

But Garrick held his head studiously averted, though the agent, looking in his colorless face, saw that his own words fell on deaf ears.

"The old man is scarcely worth the carriage; he will not bear the exposure of two week's work. However, as you make no charge to the Government— I hardly felt myself justified in refusing. 'All aboard, eh? I must bid you good evening, sir,'" And touching his hat, he sprang on the moving train.

Garrick, slowly raising his head, saw the old man's face as it passed him, peering eagerly from the dark car, and heard his weak quaver as it called out something about "how far to Mars' Streblin's," and then died away in the distance.

Then he adjusted his hat, and passing his hand over his parched face, wiped a fleck of foam from his mouth. He had saved the honor of the Randolphs; he could go back to Rosslyn. At that his eyes turned from the retreating train, and from the stars beginning to shine in the dark blue overhead, and were glued to the ground, where he thrust his boot to and fro among the straw and filth of the platform. He had no will to do otherwise.

CHAPTER XXIX.

NATHAN.

"We differ in our opinion of women, Markle, as we do in everything else," and Captain Knox puffed an impatient breath of cigar smoke through the cool evening air as if to rid himself of a momentary irritation.

"Yes, yes; I do not pretend to comprehend their wire-drawn sympathies and affinities, Knox. The woman I love is an enigma to me; if there be any subtle relation between her soul and mine I don't know it. But I love her, honestly and above board; I'll put what strength and patience God gave me into the winning of her. If I succeed, I'll be a faithful, tender husband. But I can not promise more than that. I'd never enter into her morbid, hysterical whims. I'd cure her of them, eh?"

"I wish you success," dryly, knocking the ashes from his cigar. Markle strolled up and down before the tent, whistling, a half-smile on his mouth, but the annoyed frown lingered on his companion's face. He had seen the woman whom he knew that Markle meant. They had met her during their Summer's furlough—a daughter of the blind preacher Conrad—there was certainly no affinity between her and the outspoken little Lieutenant. Knox thought there was no chance of success for him, and it angered him that he should have invited a disappointment which promised to be deep and irreparable.

"However," he said aloud, shifting his head where he lay on the grass, "in case you did not succeed, failure would not sour or embitter you, as it does men of less mellow temper, George."

Markle stopped, looking gravely into the Captain's face. "I do not mean to fail," he said, quietly.

Knox moved hastily, making a motion once or twice as if he would have spoken; a word of warning now he thought might be of incalculable benefit hereafter, but after an uneasy glance at Markle's little black-bearded face, he remained silent, and the subject was dropped.

"There is Burley! Hillo, Lieutenant!" exclaimed Markle, as an uncouth figure came lumbering up the hill. Knox smiled again, meaningly. Old Joe was popular with all the men, and had deserved his promotion; but the Captain shrewdly suspected that Markle chose him as companion beside the tent fire often because he had once known these Conrads, and now and then made incidental mention of them.

"Joe has news," said Knox, raising himself on his elbow. "I can hear him muttering to himself even here."

The young men were in front of their tent, which was pitched a little in advance of the line of the camp, on the ridge of one of the

sharp cleft Alabama hills that run back from the Tennessee River. It was the close of a chilly Autumn day; drifts of silvery mist floated over the melancholy valley at their feet, while the oblique sunlight, touching the wooded mountain sides, kindled here and there a flashing answer of scarlet or crimson flame in the green foliage. They liked their new camping-ground. The dry surface tints of the sky, the plumage of the birds that passed like wavering flecks of color through the dark recesses of the woods, the rank profusion of poisonous vines that matted the rocky cuts of the hill with brilliant blossoms belonged to a climate new to them. The forests were full of life silenced and guarded; though sometimes at nightfall the "craik" of the wild turkey escaped from the nearer thicket or an antlered head thrust from the distant shadows provoked an ineffectual shot.

The two or three regiments thrown forward along the line of the railroad in Northern Alabama from Iuka to Tuscumbia, for its protection, had found their sojourn pleasant enough. The Summer months had passed since Joe Burley had recovered from his wound, and leaving Rosslyn to await her husband's return from Kentucky had rejoined his regiment, and penetrated with them into this new ground. There were rumors afloat in camp to-day of a contemplated move northward; a vague report, also, of a pressure exerted on the President to force a proclamation which would enfranchise the slaves and enlist them on the Federal side. The news produced a peculiar unrest and excitement in this arm of the Government force, thrust forward into insecure Rebel ground.

Contrabands thronged daily into camp, having caught some mysterious whispers of the coming change.

Burley had been down in the field by the river brink where they were huddled together hungry and half-clothed, joking and singing hymns about their smouldering fires as if they were quietly safe in the "promised land."

"What kin ye do with 'em?" Joe broke out angrily as he joined the young officers. "They're a gang that wos bein' druv to the Gulf. It's starvation for them to stay in camp, and death to go back to their owners, and ther they are, filthy and half-naked, yha-ha-ing and cackling over old jokes. 'De Lord 'll see to dem. Dey's bin expectin' freedom dis long time,' they say. But not a stroke of work in their calculations. You might as well look for forecast in a baby or a blind puppy as a nigger. They just throw themselves loose on the Lord."

"One would think they might be tired of that," sneered Knox.

Burley was turning his cap inside out, with an anxious, significant look at Markle. "One of them men hed a queer message fur some one. Ther's a colored man, says he, in the caboose in the town below, that's bin ther most of the Summer, bein' caught

makin' his way to the Yankee camp. 'He's nigh about done gone, massa,' says he. 'A little, bald-headed yaller fellar, weak in his breath. When our gang wur ther in the caboose, an' he knowed we wur goin' to break fur the camp, he says, Ther's an Ohio regiment up ther, an' you ax ef ther's a Mars' Markle in it, an' giv him this paper. I wur follerin' that regiment,' says he. 'Maybe he'll help me to one day of freedom 'fore I'se put away.' That sounds like Nat, Leftenant."

"Where is the paper?"

Burley drew out a yellow scrap; the back of an old letter, on which were scrawled some numbers.

"It is Nat!" holding it close to his eyes in the dim light. "Poor wretch! This is the information he was to carry to Garfield. Too late to be of use. But he earned his freedom by it. In the caboose, you say, Burley? Knox," he hesitated, "will you help me in this matter?"

"No. I hardly feel that my commission justifies me in running off fugitive slaves," whiffing angrily at the stump of his cigar.

"As you will," quietly, turning off into the tent.

"A word with you, Leftenant," said Joe, touching him on the shoulder; and the two men walked away together.

Captain Knox, with a shrug, went into the tent; but he came out again presently to watch them as they went down the hill, passing the pickets, toward the road which led to the village. The risk they ran was uncertain to him: the people of the town and neighboring plantations had been overawed by the presence of the Federal troops, but he doubted whether, galled as they were by the rumors of the coming proclamation, they would patiently submit to direct interference with their slaves. Once he went in, armed himself, and prepared to follow them, and then sat down irresolutely on a pile of logs outside, drumming with his fingers, watching the road which they had taken, until late in the night. The songs and halloos of the contrabands down by the river added to his irritation. "What can you do with them?" he asked, as not only Joe, but the nation, weary of a so far ineffective war, was doing at that time, with a sense of over-burdened impatience. Knox was a thorough American: with thin lips, restless, doubting gray eyes, wiry, fibrous frame: he acknowledged argumentatively the wrong done to the slave, and his right to redress; but in fact, the very scars of the negro, the hurt done to his brain by this slavery, his lazy good humor, his lustfulness, his blind faith in "de Lord," jarred against Knox's nature at every point, chafed him with an unreasonable disgust and choler, the more that he could not shake off the consciousness of debt owed to this unwelcome man and brother. With all other Northerners outside of the Rad-

ical party, he cast his eyes to Liberia, to colonies in Central America, as a means of disencumbering the country of them. It was the old story. Prospero could not easily rid himself of this black Caliban, whose crown of manhood he had stolen from him.

In spite of his Democratic principles, however, when Captain Knox, about twelve o'clock, saw by the starlight three dark figures instead of two crossing the field at the foot of the hill, he only noticed that one halted weakly now and then, and dragged his feet heavily and lame, and forgot to ask whose property he was. The night was damp and chilly; he hurried into the tent, and, making up the fire, brewed a jug of hot toddy, and brought out some cold meat and bread, lit the lamp, and went out to meet them. Markle and Burley had stopped, hesitating.

"Come in, come in. What are your teeth chattering for, Joe?"

"The fog is heavy below," said Markle. "This man is a friend of mine, Captain Knox," as Nathan stood, bowing, humbly rubbing his hands. "He gave up the chance of escape from slavery once to save my life. But you are a free man to-night, Nat!" touching him on the shoulder.

"Yes, suh," looking down, holding his hand over his mouth.

"You did not tell me his history, Markle, or I would have gone with you," bustling about the tent, placing Nat in the warmest seat, "Had you any trouble?"

"None. The caboose was a miserable old shanty, and the guard half drunk. He surrendered at the first glimpse of Joe's uniform. You helped us more by brewing this toddy," sipping it. Markle was feverish with excitement in all of his jerking little body, chewed tobacco nervously, clapped his hands together, laughed loudly, and was as suddenly silent. "A free man, Nat, a free man," he cried at intervals. Burley sat silent, looking heavily in the fire, glancing now and then at the mulatto, with the awed, sober look men have when brought suddenly in contact with death in the midst of a busy day. Captain Knox, pouring out coffee cups full of the steaming drink, kept a grave watch on the bald-headed little man in the background, with his hands on his knees, and gaudy ear-rings dangling at each side of his sharp, hungry face. This was not his hypothetical fat, lazy, sensual nigger.

He touched him as he handed him a drink. "Cheer up, sir," unconsciously using the tone he judged fitted for a white man. "You've had hard measure, but your chance is come now. You'll find the world just what you please to make it."

Nathan looked up, the blood darkening his face, but the words came slowly to his untrained tongue. Before he spoke, Knox turned away and began to draw on his boots and coat. "It is time for my round. I'll leave you alone for an hour or two. You

had better get that man to sleep," aside to Markle. "No brain could stand the strain that shows itself through his eyes. Is it possible that freedom means so much to them?"

"Freedom and some other trifles," said Markle, coolly. "It is years since he saw wife or child. The strain would tell on your brain or mine, Knox, if its only relief lay in the daily life of a slave."

But Captain Knox was in no mood for argument. It was easier to turn his back on Nathan and go to his round, thinking that matters would right themselves.

"Keep him away from that crew below," he turned back to say, however, nodding to Nathan with a look that had as much respect in it as kindness.

Markle came up to the mulatto; he had put down the drink untasted.

"Why, Burley! This fellow don't understand," he said, heartily. "A free man, Nat. Free to-night!"

"Yes, suh. Yes, gentlemen," slowly, with a feeble laugh. "Seems as if I could'nt re'lize dat ar. It's bin a long time comin', suh," growing grave again, looking wistfully about the cheerful lighted tent, and out into the night beyond where the flapping curtains left an opening into the darkness.

"Dem was curous words dat gentleman said, as how de world was jest as you pleased to make it. I've bin thinking of dat ar. It's too late fur me, suh. But I was thinkin' of Tom," a flash of strength and triumph coming into his face. "He'll start different from me, suh? Eh?" eagerly.

"To be sure. Tom's chance has come now. By the way, have you heard from Anny or your boy?"

The man's apathy dropped off, his whole bony figure grew tense and eager. "I lef' de plantation when Major Bob sent me back; dat night I lef' and hid in de swamp till I make my way out to de Fairview place. De blue-coats was nigh to de riber, suh, and de slaves in all de plantations was makin' dere way to one camp or anoder. Dere was stirrin, whisperin' all ober de country; a risin' like de Jews dat rose up in de night to seek dere freedom when de first-born ob dem dat held dem in bondage lay dead. So I makes my way to find my ole woman an' my chile. I got dere late one night. I looked to see dem."

"Was she married again?" said Burley, when he stopped abruptly.

The man drew himself up erect. "She wur not my wife, suh. But she will not marry any man but me. Dey was gone," turning to Markle. "She had taken de boy and gone in search of me. It wur two months since she lef' de Fairview place. Den I turned back and comed home."

"Into the hands of James Strebling?" said Burley.

"I couldn't lose de chance of seein' her and de boy. Suh, Tom wos a baby when he wos tuk from me, an dey tell me now he's nigh as tall as me. Times, I tink its more than I kin bear, livin' year after year an him alive an me forbid to look at him."

"She did not come to the Strebling place, then?"

"I never heern nor seen naught of her. I hung night an day bout de roads. Dere were crowds of contrabands flyin' here and there, but none could tell me a word ob dem. Den de oberseer he find me and put me in de calaboose."

"What will you do now, Nathan?" asked Markle.

"I wus thinkin' of stayin' in camp. I'll send out word by all these slaves dat's goin' to and fro dat I'm here, an besides, she'll make her way at last to de Goverment camp. I'll meet her surer here dan if I look de country round for her. Dat seems de soonest way to me," looking up anxiously into Markle's face.

"No doubt you are right. When you have found them you will push on to the North?"

"No, suh," he hesitated, rubbing his hands over his knees: "praps by dat time we'll be 'lowed to strike a blow for ourselbes. I'd like to hold a gun once in my hand to help my people. Dey's waited long, suh, long. I heerd," he added, after a pause, "dat my father is libin yit. He's on de place of M's Garrick Randolph. I can't lib free, an' him in slavery."

Joe Burley turned at Randolph's name.

"Your father, eh? an old man?"

"Yes, suh. Hugh's his name. He wur a famous man in his day for lock-making an' de like, I'se heerd."

"I know his owner," said Joe, after a pause. "He is a kind, generous master, I fancy. I think I kin promise you that he will give you the old man's free papers." As he spoke, the recollection of Randolph's mention of this very man Hugh returned to him, and the conversation which followed, in which Broderip had borne a part. Some sudden thought startled Burley, causing him to half rise from the bench where he sat, scanning the mulatto's figure and face keenly, not heeding his stammering exclamations of gratitude and surprise. He made no comment, however, until an hour after, when Nathan, wrapped in a blanket, lay asleep, as he thought, in the corner; then he gave vent to his perplexity to Markle.

"Ther's a curous likeness in Nathan here to some one, that troubled me before in the gap. I've found out the man, now."

"Who is it?" asked Markle, moving sleepily.

"A surgeon in Philadelphia, Broderip by name. It's not only features. Ther's a pecoolar look in both as if they'd lost something that cost them much and never found it agin. Though Nathan," reflectively, "hes the honester face of the two. And the old man's

name is Hugh?" sitting up on his blanket, as link after link of some half-guessed riddle opened itself to him.

For some cause Markle was startled awake by his words. "I never saw this Broderip," he said; "though he was in Dubuque before my last furlough. He was an acquaintance of—of Mr. Conrad's. A friend, in fact."

"Something nearer than that, I judge," said Joe, yawning. "There was some sort of a betrothal between him and the preacher's daughter, so the women's gossip went last Spring. But the little man is full of his whims, and his love blew hot and cool, they said. Hows'ever, I heerd that he'd follered them to Dubuque, resolved finally to bring her home some day. It's likely he'll succeed."

Markle made no reply, and asked no further questions, but lay staring out of the square gap into the night. When Joe was asleep and his snores sounded through the tent like a trumpet, he got up, and going out into the thick, damp fog, sat down motionless until morning dawned.

Nathan had caught the words with the exaggerated haste and confidence of a blind man groping for the weakest clue. He repeated the name, Broderip, again and again to himself. Why should it not be? His brother had had education and friends. Why should he not be a man of mark. If he had had a chance when he was a boy he felt sometimes there was nothing he could not have become. But Tom? It would be different with Tom, thank God! He could not sleep. Little trifles, remembrances of "old Hugh," of his brother, of Amy and the boy crowded on him. Could it be that they ever would all be under one cabin roof again—and free? "De Lord Jesus," he thought, "had taken their case into his mind at de last." Most negroes would have given vent to their joy by tears and shouts of glory, but Nat lay quite still on his face, his knuckles pressed into his eyes, a clammy sweat breaking over his face. It seemed to him he could not humble himself low enough before the only Master he was ever, after this, to know, who long ago had said that He meant to loose every bond and let the oppressed go free; and He did it now.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE LONG SEARCH.

ABOUT forty miles from the tent where Nathan lay, a middle-aged woman was plodding that night along a clay country road, leading a boy by the hand. It was Anny going on with the long search for him, which had lasted now for months, but her back was to the tent, facing due south. Nobody but the stupid mulatto could have thrown the glamour of romance or interest about her or Tom, with which he had surrounded them in his wordless thonghts. She was a short, stoutly-built woman, neatly dressed in a brown calico, with firm, slow motions, and a homely, sensible face; the boy who dragged in his walk beside her was not the "peart, well-growed" lad of his father's fancy, but stunted and slight: his face, as he turned it up toward his mother's, scarcely reached her waist. The night lightened after midnight, the pale crescent of the moon hanging low over the further hills, throwing white, vapory shadows across the mountain peaks on the left, and glimmering with a ghostly pallor on the river close at their side. The Fairview place lay in level, swampy ground; until they started on this pilgrimage the mountains were new to both woman and child, and, although they had now been among them for months, when the ghastly shadows flickered over the road, and the shrill sigh of the wind rustled through the defiles, they walked closer and held each other's hand tighter. Descending nearer to the river's edge, the clay grew wet and heavy. The boy stumbled once or twice and fell.

"It's time Tom mounted his pony," his mother said, slinging the bundle she carried over her back, and picking him up.

"No, mammy, no; I'se too heavy."

"Hush, now. The barn they talked about is just over the hollow." She had a strong, cheerful voice that she tried vainly to bring to a whisper. Presently, although the boy's weight hardly balanced the bundle, she shifted him with a long breath of relief.

"You're growin' a heavy boy, you are, shore, Tom!"

He chuckled delightedly. "That's so! Seems as if I was gettin' higher, too, every day," stiffening himself. "I'll seem like a man almost to him when we find him, I reckon."

"That's shore, Tom." Her brows knitted and her nostrils swelled as she spoke, and she held him closer in her arms. He had

touched the one sore spot in the heart under the poor yellow breast, to which the boy was strained like a baby. What if the child's father should blame her for his stunted growth? what if he should not care for her boy? At first sight he was a sickly little manikin; it needed to know Tom, to find how knowledgeable he was, and the fun and queer notions in him, and what uncommon skill was in his fingers.

The boy fell asleep. She pushed on for an hour longer, when her back began to give and legs to tremble. The long journeys and protracted fasting were beginning to tell on even her iron frame. Nearing a wooden house whose long veranda, supported on piles, under which a half-dozen pigs were sheltered, showed it to be a planter's dwelling, she skulked behind a row of china trees, past the negro quarters to the whitewashed shed used as a barn. The chance of sleep and the smell of the dry, fragrant husks quickened her steps; she thrust a way for herself and the boy into the loft, and heaped the straw up about them, laying him down carefully. The moonlight gave her enough light through the square hole in the wall at her side to untie his shoes, and draw them off; the soles were half gone, and when she tried to pull off the tattered blue woollen socks, they clung tight with matted blood to his swollen feet. The child started awake with a groan.

"You didn't tell me of this, Tom," turning the cold, little lumps of bleeding flesh over in her hands, holding them up to her breast. "You trudged along all day," looking at him and them with her mother's eyes. "I never kerried you till to-night."

"I'se not goin' to have him think me a whimperin' fellah when we find him. Keep de shoes off, mammy. Dey burns like fire," his head falling on the straw again, watching her with heavy eyes.

Anny was a thrifty body; at home in her garret room she had a shelf of bottles of herb lotions, goose oil, mixtures for colds, for the use of the family; but now, left alone, she had not a rag or drop of warm water to wash the torn, burning little feet of her child, in her hands. Nothing in her slavery, nothing in her vain desperate search had hurt her as did that little trifle; she laid them softly down, getting up gently, so as not to wake the boy. But his big, hazel eyes she found were still fixed on her, with an unreasoning stare she fancied, rather than the ordinary watch they kept on her face, in which a laugh seemed always to wait. She called him: "Tom!" He answered with a foolish laugh. She put her hand on his cheek—it was burning and dry; the breath came with slow, hoarse respirations.

She turned sharply and went to the barn-door. "He's worn-out. I've killed him!" she said, in a shrill, stern voice. She stopped to draw one or two choking breaths, and then crossed the yard to a pump, making no effort at concealment, and drew a

gourd-full of water, which she carried back to the barn, bathing his feet with it. She hardly looked up when steps followed her, and presently the sound of negroes' voices was heard outside, and, after a mumbled whispering, a gray-headed old man thrust his black face in at the window.

"Who's you am, woman? Whar you from? What ails dat ar chile, hi?"

"I'm off the Fairview place. Come here. Hold up his head."

He obeyed her, scrambling in at the window, followed by a half-grown lad, who stood apart while the old man lifted the boy, opened his jacket, and felt the pulse in his throat, holding his head critically to one side with half shut eyes. "Dat chile wants somefin to eat"—sententiously—"and a night's sleep. Dat feber's no 'count. It'll spend itself by mornin'."

She had gathered Tom up to her breast. "Eh, dah you think so?"—her dry hot eyes fixed on the old man's face. "Mebbe it's so. We've lived on parched corn and berries for ten days. I tought I'd killed him."

The boy by the window muttered something, and went headlong down the ladder. In five minutes he was back with a bundle of roasted yams, hot out of the ashes from some of the cabins, where they had been ready for the midnight meal, of which the negroes are so fond. In the other hand he carried a jug of milk. Anny fed the boy herself, while the others broke the yams in small pieces, the two black faces bent anxiously over her.

"I think you saves his life," she said, breathlessly watching the little jaws work feebly and the old, pleased light come into his eyes.

"You'm refugee?" ventured the old man, with a keen look. "Dar's no need ob fear ob us. Dey come long hyur, night afer night, fleein', fleein'. Seems 's if de day ob de Lord's a dawnin'. But you wos gwine de wrong way, Missy; you's back wur to de Norf. We seed you on de road."

The woman, who had laid Tom's head on her lap and covered him for his sleep, looked up, bewildered, from the yam, which she was eating ravenously. "How ken I tell which is de norf or which de souf? We's been trabellin', trabellin', Tom an' me, for many months, here and there, trough de mountains and cross ob de ribers, widout rest, night an' day. Once we wur put in de calaboose, an' twice I was caught an' lashed; but we got off. Seems as ef our journey never ud end. Dar's one mountain passed and anudder risin' jest beyond, and dar's one army marchen to-day, an' anudder approachin' to-morrow, an' us hidin' an' hidin', an' no word comin' of dat which we seek."

"Dat's yer freedom, like?" he hesitated.

"I'se de woman of an hostler of Mass Jeems Sterbling," she

said, "an' dis is his boy. We's goin' to find him, an' lib togeder once fore we die."

"Strebling's place is in Morgan county," with finger on his chin. "You'se a long way off, Missy."

"We's bin dar, but he'd gone."

"Shore as you lib, woman, he's jined a gang an' gone inter a Yankee camp. Dat's yer course. Dese refugees keep a count ob each oder. Dar's a camp ten miles farder up de riber. You push on t' dat pint arly in de mornin'. Wur a gang ob refugees went on dar yesterday. Dey'le have news ob yer man."

"Ten miles?"

"Straight on de riber track. I bet you you find yer man dar."

"Yer'd best lose no time, Missy," said the boy, "dar's de word kum to-night dat de Yankee troops is gwine to be called out ob dis part ob de country immediate, an' de cullored people's makin' ready to foller dem."

"Wher's does they go?" with a bewildered glance over the great stretch of mist-covered mountains and valleys. "They's off plantations, like me, an' knows nothin'. Wher's does they stop?"

"De Lo'd save you, woman, dey goes Norf!" the old man ejaculated, with a smothered ya-ha at her ignorance. "It's ready for dem, dar. Dar's no more pickin' cotton, or totin' de bar'ls. It's de day ob Jubilee. Dey's moughty glad to see dem, dar, wid dere chains knocked off. Now you go to sleep. Ise'd go wid you, to-morrow, but I kent leab ole Missus, in de house dar. She's alone."

The boy stopped at the head of the ladder. "Ise'll call you fore day. Dem troops is movin' soon. You'd best lose no time."

"An hour's sleep—that's 'nuff." She sat up uneasily looking after them; half rose once or twice to pick up the boy and go on without delay; but while she hesitated she slid down gradually on the straw beside him and slept heavily, till dawn was breaking, and the boy Pete shook her by the shoulder.

"It's time you wur off, Missy. Is'e brought you yer breakset, an hyur's some yams in dis cloth; dey's off my own patch. Does yer hev to kerry dat young un?"

Tom had scrambled sturdily to his feet, but the blood oozed out on the straw, and he sat down, gritting his teeth with pain. "Yer cant do it, Mammy. Ise'll stay hyur. Yer kin come back for me. I'se don't want to be kerried like a baby when we find him."

Anny laughed; her nap had brought back her hearty, strong laugh again. "It's only ten miles farder, Tom. What's that?" climbing down the ladder, and taking Tom on her back.

"It's a long stretch, wid dat boy for weight," said Pete, "an' de road's heaby. You'd best leab yer bundle. Ise'll keep it safe."

"No," sharply, thrusting it under her arm. "That's important. Bid Peter good-by, like a gentl'man, Tom," standing gravely still

while Tom touched his hat over her shoulder, winding up by a series of boyish nods, and winks, and chuckles, to pay himself for the drill. She left a message for the old man, with a slight affectation of matronly dignity, and then struck down into the road which was yet gray with the wet fog. Tom's head soon dropped on her shoulder; the sleeping little body was a dead weight; the clay became mire that clung to her feet and pulled her back; the ten miles lengthened indefinitely. The negroes in the fields (for she did not hesitate to stop and ask direction of them) placed the Yankee camp now fifteen, now twenty miles beyond, first on one side of the river, then on the other.

As day dawned, and the sun came out hotly, she left the main road and pushed her way slowly through the underbrush by the river, to avoid the chance white passengers that she would meet, glancing from side to side in fear of the moccasin or rattlesnakes which came out to bask along the water ledges, and stopping now and then to pick out the ticks that left their poisoned trails across her strained feet. Once or twice she looked doubtfully at the bundle, as if tempted to rid herself of the additional weight, every ounce of which told now on her failing strength; but she slung it to the other side, and struggled on.

"You won't give dat up, Mammy? No?" said Tom, eagerly, for he was awake and watching, as usual, her every look and turn.

"No, Tom. I'se don't want the father to think we'se filthy an' no account when we finds him. It's bin three years I'se saved the money fur them clo's, an' we'll put 'em on when we'se nigh camp. It'll not be long now, please God," shading her eyes with her hand to scan the sun-lighted heights beyond the river, the breath coming slowly through her weighted lungs.

"Tell me a story," said Tom. "Tell me whar we'll go when we find him."

She laughed, and took a quicker step or two, shifting him lightly on her shoulder. "Now you've heerd that a hunderd times, Tom."

"Go on."

She went on, well pleased. "Well, Tom, yer father he'll get a house, I don't know where. But it'll be ours—his an' mine," her mouth shutting firmly.

"Whar'll you get the money to pay for it? Heh, Mammy!"

"They pay ther' for work. I want you to take account of this hyur, I tell you, Tom. I want you, if you're took back into slavery, to learn it by heart. It'll keep you from bein' a lazy nigger as it hes me. The money that's bought them plantations and furnished them houses was made out of our sweat an' blood. *We* bought them; *we* paid for them. Ther's them among our people as say if ever they're free they'll claim one-third the crops as pay; an' it

would be but fair. If yer father an' me, an' them like us, hed been paid for our labor, we'd not have been the offscouring of the nation to-day, with scars on our backs in place of the wages that's bin our due." Her voice grew shrill at the last word.

The boy listened gravely. The lesson, apparently, was not a new one, but the plans for the future were pleasanter. "Go on, Mammy. What'll you put in the house?"

"Money's easy made ther', they say, by them that chooses to work, an' we'll buy things like the white folks. You kin help choose them, Tom. Yer father's ready at whatever he sets his fingers to, in the stable or blacksmith shop," she continued, slowly, "and I could earn as much, likely, shirt-making, or at doin' up clo's, if th' other give out. Them's bin my plans. They seem shore to me."

"What am I to be, heh, Mammy?"

She stopped short in the road, putting him from her back into her arms, drawing her breath short as she looked into his face, rubbing her hands over his puny legs and arms.

"You? *You?*"

All the hope, the hunger, the ambition which the mother had concentrated during years of slavery in the poor little manikin, looked out of her face at that minute.

"Ther's nothin' *you* can't be! Nothing!"

The peculiar, attentive, grave look with which he had listened to her a few moments before came into his eyes, but he said nothing. She put him down on a rock close by, and stood beside it, her jaws working nervously. "P'raps you've heerd, as I hev, that Mist Flory values you among her stock at on'y fifty dollars." She stroked his low, protruding forehead, stooped and laid her cheek to it. She did not know how to be tender enough to him. "Sonny boy, yer mother knows what's hyur, and hyur," touching his head and breast. "She knows what yer worth; she's thought it over night an' day these many years. Ther's nothin' any man kin do that God hes barred you out from. Nothin'. Ef the white men would open the doors for ye—if they'd on'y open the doors jes a little way!" He looked down into the muddy ground. Neither spoke for some minutes.

They were down in a hollow between the road and river, hidden from both by the tangled masses of undergrowth and scarlet cactus. Tom held up his hand warningly as a horse's heavy trot came thudding up the road through the clay. She pulled the branches aside to reconnoitre, then drew her skirt from Tom's hold. "Stay hyur," she cried, breathless; "it's Jake from the Streblin' place! He'll tell me wher' to find him," and throwing down the bundle, she climbed the rocks up to the level of the road.

It was long before she came back, and then she walked slowly,

the skin of her face and throat, under its gay cotton kerchief, grayish red, as a mulatto's becomes under excitement.

The boy got up. "You've heerd of him?"

She nodded, but did not speak for a minute or two. "I got word from him; from Nathan, to you an' me. It's four years since I heerd from Nathan, Tom—yer father."

The child took up her hand and held it in his two thin ones.

"We're to jine him," after a pause, "in a camp up the river. It's three days' journey from hyur, but what's that? what's that? He'll wait for us—I'm shore to see him!" She had begun to pin up her skirt, preparing to start; but she dropped down suddenly, throwing her arms across her head, her sturdy frame shaken with tearless sobs.

He pulled at her vainly. "You never gibed up like this, Mammy."

She stood up after a long time. "I never was shore of seein' him before. I'm stronger for a bit of a cry. Wimmen's wimmen. Come on, boy," sitting down for him to mount on her back, joking and laughing as they turned back to the point from which they had come, and began their vague journey.

"I've a chance of a lift on the way," she said, presently. "If I kin make the pint of a mill dat's beyond hyur by nightfall, Jake 'll take us aboard a scow he's gwine down with, loaden with corn. It's slow travellin', but as fast as I kin walk now-a-days."

"Yer nigh worn out, Mammy," tightening his arms about her neck. At which she only laughed, and let her rough, hearty voice loose in a resounding Methodist hymn.

CHAPTER XXXI.

AFTER THE BATTLE.

Either Jake was, for the first time in his life, before his time, or they failed to reach the mill by nightfall, for they saw nothing of him, and, after waiting for a couple of hours, pushed on, on foot. During the two days that followed Anny gave herself no time for sleep or rest. An hour's delay might cost all that she had waited for, for years, just when her hand was on the goal. She never lost heart or was too tired to hum or whistle a tune for Tom, being "so shore ob findin' him waitin' just yander." A woman will make as long and patient a tug in life as a camel, if you only give her a kind word now and again, and show her a bit of green and comfort at the end.

At the close of the second day they were still distant about fifteen miles from the Federal camp; the course of the river, which they were compelled to follow, was circuitous, and delayed them. As the sun began to dip in the yellow flood of light in the west, a

curdling ripple was heard in the broad current behind them, and Jake and his scow floated into sight, with a loud halloo. He pushed it up to the bank.

"Whar you bin rampin' about, woman? Git in hyur. Dat's all right. Mass Jeems ready t' help off de contrabands; he done gone l'yal since de blue coats comed around; reckon he's turned ab'lishinist bym time he sell dis corn to dem. Kiver up, dar, I say; keep yer head down, you little nig, you!" He made them lie down, covering them with the sacks of meal and fodder with an anxiety that argued badly for his master's approval of the proceeding, and then thrust out again into the current. During that night and the next morning, Anny lay, rocked by the rippling water, looking out of her cranny between the sacks at the shifting orchards, brakes and woods, dyed with hot Autumn tints, which lined the shore. There was not much appreciation of nature in her canny face and keen eyes. She was a shrewd woman, and gifted with just that bigoted, acrid affection for whatever in life had adhered to herself, husband, child, or sect, which made white women such bitter, illiberal partisans during the civil war. But the poor mulatto's experience of politics and country was bounded by the Fairview sugar plantation; the Fairviews and their slaves were the sole subjects of her shrewdness or observation; she saw that the people in the quarters were to their master, under all his lax kindness, sheer property —"paying field hands," "likely breeders;" any kind of intelligence, skill, beauty, among them had its specific value in dirty bank notes; she knew them (being a sort of nurse or handy woman) in their wedding-days, in spasms of religious excitement, in the pains of child birth or death; times when Nature drags the soul, as God made it, to the light, out of a white or black body; she had time to brood morbidly over the difference of her judgment of them and that of her master. So it came that she talked secretly, from cabin to cabin, with a feverish exaggeration of "her people" as a nation especially blessed by God because wronged by men. She had, naturally enough, that inflated idea of their importance common to children or nations held too long in tutelage. She had, like all her people, a secret sense of the terrible wrong done her, for which freedom would be no redress, and for which no money could pay; in the North, among the people who had given their lives to free her, they would surely be welcomed with outstretched hands; they would be given at least the chance to make the best of what natural power slavery had left to themselves and their boy.

But they were going North, together, with their child. In spite of Anny's harangues on political economy, she was but a silly woman. During the long hours when they drifted down stream, lulled by the slow, rocking motion, she kept muttering Nathan's name over to

herself, hugging Tom's hands to her mouth and throat. Being a woman, too, it was less of her people's destiny that she thought than of the house of which Tom had heard a hundred times. Tom was not so curious or childish about it as she; she knew the dimensions of the little parlor and bedroom and kitchen, as if she had seen them with her eyes; she had planned the pattern of the rag-carpet she would make, and the shelves which Nathan would put up for Tom's books. For Tom would go to school, and at night he could teach her and his father to read.

It was near noon on the next day when Jake pulled the scow up to shore into a jungle of trailing vines, purple and orange, with flat, broad-leaved flowers. "Time fur ye to bundle out, you two. I kent git no nearer de Yankee camp wid dis scow; ye'll hev to foot it. It's nuffin but a strip, nohow," standing in the water to push the boat out after they had landed.

"What way shall we trabble now?" demanded Tom, affecting an air of mannish boldness, seeing that his mother stood stupid and dazed.

"'Taint no trabblin'; it's jest a walk to the pint of yander wood. Turn dat rock dar, an' ye'll see de tents. Nat's dar, I reckon," glancing at Anny, and then, stretching himself on his back on the hot deck, he drifted out into the stream, whistling "Zip Coon."

Tom pulled his mother's sleeve. "Jake says he's ther', Mammy. It's only a few minutes now."

She nodded once or twice, moving her lips and holding her shut hand to her chest as if some pain had wrung her breath away; then she took him by the hand and, still silent, began to walk hurriedly up the hill. But the boy, who was shaking, ready to shriek and cry with excitement, pulled back vigorously. "You forgot the clo's, Mammy. He'll think we'se poor nigger trash when we'se find him. I want him to know, fust look at me, 'dat's my son.' I want my new clo's on."

She laughed a loud, hoarse laugh; but it seemed to bring her to herself. Her cheeks grew hot, her eyes sparkled. She untied the bundle of clothes eagerly, washed the boy in the warm, plashing water, and, sheltered by the shadows of the overhanging trees, dressed him in a suit of coarse, dark blue flannel, made in a loose sailor fashion, which concealed the thin body, with a rolling collar, that left the throat bare and set off the well-poised, earnest little head and olive-tinged face. She had the quick eye of her race for color. She tied a black ribbon at his throat, rumpled up the wet, waving, black hair, her face flushing red with pride.

"You've got a white boy's featur's, and the sorrowful eyes of yer people," she said, kneeling to tie his shoes. "Now you wait for me, Tom," with a girlish laugh, pitiful enough in so old a woman. "Yer father hasn't seen me for years, an' he used to think nobody was so peart an' purty as Anny."

She was long in coming back; her hands were unsteady and slow in obeying her will; she had the feeling of a bride making ready to meet her husband, deepened and made intense by the pain of those miserable long years. Tom was watching anxiously for her, and when she came ran up, and stroked down her blue print dress and the spreading white apron, but, boy-like, he made no comment on her looks. She watched him, askance, as she tied a white handkerchief about her head. "Would you"—she hesitated, "now would you call me an old woman, Tom?"

Tom inspected her critically. "I don' no; yer jest Mammy to me; I reckon you'll be that to him, too; it don't matter about the old."

She laughed a soft, low laugh, now. "Come, we'll go now."

The noon light glared white into the dusty road and flashing river below; the shadows of the far-off mountains drowsed into a dusty, purple line; the bee's drone died as they approached; the gossamer webs lay untouched on the grass since the night before; over the bend in the hills, where the negro had said the camp lay, a flock of birds were wheeling in low concentric flight. There was a curious look of unmolested solitude in the mountains and lonely road, but the woman, with her face bent to the ground, and the sound of her own heart beating against her strong chest, dulling her ears, saw nothing.

Tom's hand twitched nervously in hers. "It's only a few minutes now, Mammy. Sing so dey hear us comin'."

"I kent do that."

He glanced up at her and was silent; did not wince, even, when, as they neared the rock behind which lay the camp, her fingers crushed his hand in their grasp, the nails going into the flesh. They gained the rock, passed it.

Beyond lay an open field; in the hot sunlight, the grass trodden and torn up in ruts and holes, heaps of straw, of charred wood, broken bits of mouldy bread, battered canteens, coffee-grounds scattered over it; under a reddening gum-tree two half-naked black boys lolled.

"Is der no camp? Is he gone, Mammy," asked Tom, shrilly.

Anny made no answer; crossed the field to the boys. "Whar's de regiments dat was hyur?"

"Dunno; 'spec dey's in de big fight yander; dey moved day 'fore yesterday."

The burned grass under foot, the blue, glazed arch of sky grew indistinct before Tom's dizzy eyes; he leaned his head against his mother's hip; her voice sounded loud and coarse as a man's.

"Whar's de fight?"

"Byin Iuka."

"Wur thar any cullored men 'long ob dem regiments?"

One of the boys ventured a guess that there were fifty mule-drivers; the other brought it down to ten. "Anyways, I seed a lot of or'nary niggers 'round, ration time."

"Iuka?" She looked down to the far purple horizon line that seemed to vanish and reappear in the mist of heated air; the sultry glare, the noonday silence around, added to the dull, dead blank that yawned in her brain, instead of the delicious thrill and fever of a moment ago. A countryman, who was picking up firewood over the field, came up, and looked gravely at her.

"If you want to go to the battle-field, young woman," he said, compassionately, "I don't keer if you ride in my cart; I'm goin' right along; though ye'll find none there but the dead; Rosecrans is follerin' the gray-coats since midnight; they've gone to Bay Springs. You can ride if you like. May be your man's dead; you can search for him," in the same sober, unmoved tone.

"He's not dead. Yes, I'll ride, thank you, sub. Hyur's de cart, Tom. He's not dead," looking fiercely in the boy's face, as she lifted him in.

She did not open her lips again while the cart jolted along over the rough road during the intenser heat of the afternoon, until evening began to gather, and an earth-colored, sultry cloud sank down heavily, flattening the sky into a plane over head, and bringing the distant hills and hamlets into sharp photographic relief.

"Like to have a thunder-shower 'fore midnight," remarked their guide, under his breath.

Anny put her bent hand behind her ear, her eyes scanning the silent cane-fields and muddy creek with something of the baited keenness of a thirsty, exhausted hound.

"Yer listenin' for the guns? Battle was over last night. Price moved off shortly after dark come on, and Rosecrans is on his track. Them ruts is whar th' artillery passed," pointing to the gashed, muddy fields on either side. "They went into the fight in the middle of a drenchin' rain yesterday mornin'."

The horse had pulled the cart slowly up the slippery road, and, reaching the brow of the hill, they looked down into a wide, oblong plain, ridged with dark spurs of the mountains that lay in a sullen bulwark across the northern horizon. Fitful gusts of wet fog were driven over it through the twilight; the wooded ravines and clumps of underbrush began to lose their identity, and faded into forlorn patches of shadow on the dreary flat below. Here and there a pillar of gray smoke wavered up from the forests, smouldering after the shells of the night before. They got out of the cart, and went down into the valley, through the clogging clay of the road, the driver leading the horse, a fine, cold mist driving in their faces.

"It was through that gap," pointing with his whip, "that the blue-coats come in; they was crowded in that nick between two

hills, shet in by hickory woods, when the shells began to spit fire at them, and there lay Price's army before them, like a black, oner din' sea." The man stopped as the cart sunk into a rut, leaning his elbows on the wheel, and looking leisurely down at the silent stretch of land beneath him and at the storm-clouds hurrying up over it from below the horizon, like mutes to a funeral.

"That was a sight to see!" in the same monotonous tone, "the smoke and rain makin' it night overhead, and the flames belchin' through, and the Yankees givin' yell after yell, as they was mowed down. You can't see from here, but them fields and woods is filled with dead men, starin' upward."

"Wur de black men in de battle?" asked the boy.

"They were'nt allowed guns; but there was none of them empty-handed when that work was goin' on." He pulled the horse hastily by the bridle and walked on a few steps, then turned to Anny. "You don't see that I am one of your sort?"

She shook her head, indifferently.

"I'm a slave, off of Harkin's land; I'm the son of Colonel Burr, in Car'lina; he sold me last Spring; I've not ten drops of black blood in me; I can read better'n my master; I know what that there bloody ground and them dead bodies mean; they mean that the day's clarin' for us; ther's not one of them dead men, white or black, that didn't write your freedom and mine with his blood on the ground—whether he fought for it or not."

"Nathan's not dead," said Anny, loosening the collar that bound her like an iron band about the neck. Whether her people were free or not seemed a far-off, paltry matter to her. She scarcely heard her companion singing "John Brown's body," in a stentorian voice, as they went down the hill.

There was a little hut at the foot of the hill, in which a woman was stirring a pot that hung over a blazing fire. It looked cheerful and homelike. Anny came into the open door and placed the boy beside her. Then, without a word or look for him, she went out, clasping her hands behind her, and struck through the thickest of sassafras bushes to where the moving light of some torches showed that they were burying the dead.

All night she searched for him.

The men, left to gather the dead, yet unburied, through the miles of forest and cornfield over which the battle had raged, were very kind to her; took her with them from gully to gully, for it was to these by-places that the wounded men oftenest had dragged themselves, and lay now stark and contorted with strange variety of suffering. When she helped turn them over, and their half open eyes met hers, the words of the cart-driver began to take meaning to her. Was this price paid to give her and her boy their chance?

Through the gullies, climbing the sharp cliffs, wading in the

creek to drag out a body that swayed up and down, half under water, the cold, sleety rain blinding her until the long night had waned and morning dawned. She came then into the hut where she had left Tom, with her usual resolute, cheerful smile and hearty voice.

"I've seen them all," she whispered to him, kneeling down before him and hugging his hands to her breast. "He's not among them, Tom. There was no black men buried before I came." Then she put her head down on his little knees, and was quiet for a while.

The woman who owned the hut came in, and Anny got up and gravely thanked her for the boy's shelter.

"You might have thought me a drunken woman last night, but I was in great trouble."

"I seen that," she said, kindly. "He wurn't in the way. He's a cunnin' little chap—Did you hev news of his father?"

"Not jest direct word," confidently; "but the white gentl'men yander advise me to foller the army out on the Fulton road. I'll be sure to find him ther'."

"Are you goin' on foot?"

"Yes, Missus, on foot."

The woman heaped a plate with smoking rice, and pouring some molasses over it, gave it to her.

"I can't eat, Missus," putting it before the boy.

"You've waited a long time to see yer man? Some weeks, I reckon?"

"Longer than that," with a pathetic smile on her homely face. "But the day's clarin'! We'll soon be at home all togedder," laying her hand quietly on the boy's knee, while her eyes shone as they looked out over the valley brightening under the dewy dawn.

Three days after this, Anny led Tom by the hand up the street of the little town of Jacinto to a straggling wooden building used as a hospital. "You keep up heart, Tom," she said. "We're shore to find him now." But her face had grown haggard and sharp since that night on the battle-field. They were jostled off the pavement at every step by groups of soldiers passing up and down; but she pushed her way patiently, until, going through the gate, they found themselves in a little box of an office where a red-headed, wide-awake young man sat writing.

"Well, my good woman, your business?"

"I was inquirin', suh, for a cullored man named Nathan, thinkin' he might be in the hospital."

"No such person employed here, eh, Captain Sands?"

The Captain, a bloodless, flat-chested young man reading a newspaper, shook his head.

Anny's lips fell apart, colorless. "P'raps he's among the wounded, suh?"

The clerk looked up impatiently. "No, he's not. Is he your husband?"

She paused a moment, patting Tom's head. "He's my boy's father, suh."

Captain Sands threw down his paper, his round, lightish eyes kindling with disgust. "Is there no shame or decency left among this people? I believe that virtue is a thing unknown to an African woman! It is deplorable in a country professing Christ, to find such a condition of affairs as I meet here, James."

Anny drew back, step by step, her hand held up. "Suh—suh!" she cried, "not before my Tom! He's my son. He loves me."

"You should be ashamed to claim him," with a severe frown. "I hold that this is one of the insuperable obstacles to the redemption of the negro race, James. It is hopeless—hopeless."

The woman looked at him, bewildered, trying to read his meaning; she slowly recovered her grave self-possession.

"Suh," she said, quietly, "you's a young man, and yer life's bin easy. Dat Lord Jesus, as you spoke of, he wud hev seen ther' was somethin' to say on our side." She took Tom by the hand, and turned to go out.

"Shan't we find him hyur, Mammy?" cried the boy.

Her mouth moved feebly, but made no sound. At the door a big, uncouth old man ran against them.

"Who's this?" stopping short, and scanning them keenly.

"She's in search of a colored man; her—her husband," said the clerk, with eager kindness.

"Name of Nathan?"

Anny stopped, staggering against the wall. She held out her hands toward Burley. The dark blood settled about her nostrils and in the wrinkles of her homely face. "Is he dead?" she said. But Joe did not hear her.

"Hev you bin searchin' for him?" he demanded.

Tom's shrill, fierce little voice piped out for his mother. "She's bin widout him these five years, Marster. She's nigh done gone in de search. Look dar," lifting up her limp fingers and letting them fall. "It's months since she's slep' in a bed. Dar's nothin' crossed her lips to eat since yesterday."

"My God!" said Captain Sands, starting to his feet.

"Is he dead?" she cried, shrilly.

"Dead? No, God bless you. He's alive and well, Nathan is," stammered Joe. "He's not just here, but—there, woman, there! You'll see him—Tut! tut! Poor devil!" as her head dropped on her breast, and she sank in a heavy lump to the floor.

"I have some brandy—it's from weakness, starvation!" said Captain Sands, clearing the steps with a jump in his haste to reach the house.

"I'd best call a woman," said James, gravely, as he helped Joe lay her head straight. "Don't cry, my little man; your mother's only tired. There's a spare bed in the hospital, no doubt," in a lower tone, "and we can smuggle her in."

But before they could take her into the house her eyes were open again, questioning Joe's face. He shuffled uneasily under them. "I'll tell you the truth," he blurted out. "Nat was wounded, for he fought like a tiger. One don't jest examine the color of a man's skin in the thick of a fight to see if he's the right to kerry arms. It warn't but a broken bone or two. But Leftenant Markle he hed a cut across the shoulder, here, and he got Nat sent with him, as body servant, knowin' the fellar wouldn't be keered for here. An' they left yesterday. I don't rightly know wher' they're sent," in answer to her look, "but it's to some hospital in Tennessee."

"Can we go?" trying to sit upright.

"No."

The men exchanged perplexed glances after their prompt decision. The sudden pallor on the worn, ugly face, full of tenderness and patience, the signs of age in the gray hairs and scarred lines, had touched them as no youth nor beauty would have done. The nurse from the hospital, a fresh-skinned, Quaker woman, looked quickly from one to the other.

"May I tell thee what to do, friend," she said. "I need help indoors there with the ironing, and sometimes in the wards. Thee shall get thy strength first, and then thee will do what thee can for me. Thee has willing hands, I am sure. Meanwhile, Friend Burley will doubtless communicate with Lieutenant Markle, and advise thee of the course thy husband has taken. As soon as he hears, thee shall join him."

"A good plan! an excellent plan!" exclaimed Sands. "I doubt not I can discover Markle's whereabouts myself."

"You might as well sarch for a grasshopper in a harvest-field," growled Joe aside. "He went up in a general jail delivery of wounded. Howsever, it's the best chance for the woman to do as Friend Sarah perposes."

Meanwhile, Anny got up, holding Tom close, smiling with the tears on her yellow cheeks. The Quaker's words were a better cordial than the Captain's brandy. "Yer all very kind gentl'men," courtesying humbly. "I'll be glad to do what I can in de house, Missus. I'se counted, usual, a perty fair ironer," and went out without another word.

But that night, kneeling by Tom's little cot in the clean garret, she sobbed and laughed like the silliest of women. "I knowed we'd see him soon! God's good. I knowed it would be soon. An' on the first of de year they say freedom comes—freedom for him and you, Tom, an' for all our people. De Lord God hes seen at last

what de yoke was dat laid on us, an' He hes took it off foreber!" She let her head rest on the edge of the pallet. When she raised it, the boy was sitting up, with the strange, grave look of inquiry on his face. There was something in it she could not understand.

"What is it, Tom?"

He turned from her evasively. "I was thinkin' of dat chance comin' to me; ef it would be worth anything."

"It am de chance of havin' a home, an' a father an' mother, like white, 'spectable boys. It am the chance of bein' a good, honnoble man. That's shore."

"But I'll allays be cullored, Mammy?" anxiously.

"What does that matter?" She sang rejoicing bits of class-hymns under her breath as she undressed, and laying down beside him, fell asleep long before the boy, with a smile on her face. But there was none on his.

CHAPTER XXXII.

IN THE HOSPITAL.

Burley had underrated the importance of Markle's injury; the wound in his shoulder after he reached the hospital at Nashville produced a low fever, which held him week after week, lying on his pallet, without acute pain, but growing daily more bony and sapless and yellow. This, too, while his regiment fought the battle of Corinth, and came up to Kentucky, finding death or promotion, as their chance might be.

"Look at me," he said to the assistant surgeon one morning, pulling up his shirt-sleeve, with a forced laugh. "I'm withered into a mere wisp of nerves; I'm as captious and hysteric as a woman; the main spring has had a jar, and your drugs don't touch it, Hall."

Hall took off his gloves, straightened and folded them gravely. "No, I know that, Lieutenant," putting them in his breast pocket. "The truth is, your symptoms are such as I have not met before; and I advise you now, as I did two weeks ago, to apply for passage north, where you can be properly treated. There is a hospital in Philadelphia for the cure of nervous diseases produced by wounds."

Markle shook his head. "It is too late; I could not bear the journey." After a moment's silence, spent in looking irritably from side to side, he broke into a laugh. "By George, it's humiliating to think a fester, left by a bit of lead, has the power to change a man as no conflict of soul could do; I grow more selfish and cowardly day by day, all out of a bit of hacked flesh. What of my man, Nat?" changing his tone, "you give him a call now

and then? He deserves care, doctor; good wood, knotted in the growth, but sound at the root."

"The man grows better but slowly," said the doctor, rising to continue his rounds. "He hinders his recovery by his anxiety to return to Alabama. Sheer folly, you know; Bragg has stopped our communication with the army tolerably effectually, for the present, and even if there was transportation there is not likely to be room made for sick niggers."

"No," said Markle, gravely. "Understand, Hall," raising his voice, "the man is under my protection while we remain; he is my servant, for the present, and I desire that he shall have proper attention."

"If you go North, then," said the doctor, pausing at the door, "he will accompany you?"

Markle hesitated. "There is no question of that kind," abruptly. "I am not going to the North."

"Bragg threatens an attack."

"So? Well, better be checked off by a bullet than to sour and dry in soul and body, like a green, stunted apple. Um! Here is Lytle with the letters!" pulling himself up on the pillow.

An hour after the doctor received an urgent summons to Markle, and found him sitting up in the bed, a scarlet blotch of color on each hollow cheek. "I have had Lytle in search of you all the morning, Hall. I want your certificate, or whatever is necessary to pass me to that hospital you spoke of. I want a chance for life; I'm stifling here."

"You have changed your mind suddenly?" lifting his sandy eyebrows with mild surprise.

"I have reason—I have reason," kicking the quilt off impatiently. "How soon can I leave this infernal bunk? My legs and arms are half paralyzed," stretching them out. "And to think of all I have to do," under his breath.

"I think you can bear the journey better than you supposed," tranquilly replied the lethargic doctor. "I see no difficulty in the way of your being sent on by an early train, say to-morrow. I'm heartily glad you are going," cordially; "you need total rest and relief from all exciting causes, and you will have them there."

"Yes, yes," with a faint smile. "To-morrow let it be, then."

"What of the mulatto, Nathan?"

Markle started out of a fit of abstraction into which he had fallen. "Nat? I had forgotten him. Poor fellow! Could he be removed?"

"With care, yes."

"I must see him at once, then." Hall gave the requisite orders, and in a few minutes Nathan was brought in and seated by Markle's bed.

He neither mumbled over Markle's altered face nor cried out for

God to bless him, but sat quiet after the first glance, his hands on his knees, looking at the ground; but when the Lieutenant held out his hand, cheerfully, saying that his looks belied him, and that he meant to cheat old Death for fifty years yet, the older man's voice failed when he tried to speak, and he only nodded, coughing behind his fingers.

"You don't look in the best training yourself, Nathan."

"No, suh, no. But I'se gainin', day by day. De rations is berry good, suh. An' I tink lookin' for'ad to de first ob de year is berry helpful. I hev'nt seen you since de good news come, suh," his face lighting.

"No. I never thought to live to see the day when your people would be free. To be honest, Nathan, I have dreaded it—sudden freedom, I mean. The horrors of insurrection——"

"O, dat ar, suh?" thoughtfully, after waiting for him to go on. "I don' know 'bout dat, suh. De white people in de Souf, dey want der own guver'ment, an' dey fights for it wid artillery an' Parrott guns, an' kills tousands, an' dey calls it war; an' Nat Turner, he want his freedom, an' he fights wid knives an' pikes, an' sech wepons as he gets, an' kills fifty odd, an dey calls it murder. De black people is not revengeful, suh. If dey hes der freedom gib em, suh, you'll not hear ob no insurrections."

"God forbid! But Nathan, it was of another matter I wished to talk to you. I am going North to-morrow, and I want you to go with me."

The mulatto looked up with a sudden terror, and put out his hand as if to draw the young Lieutenant to him.

Markle laughed. "You look like a drowning man, Nat."

"I'se so alone hyur, Mass Markle; when you'se gone God knows wher'll I turn. I find dis is a big world, suh," his eyes wandering about with a vague, homesick look.

"But I intend you to go with me."

"I tank you, suh," slowly. "But dat can hardly be; I must go back an' find Anny an' de boy; Ise not done forgot dem when I cum back from death's door."

Markle fingered the sheet uneasily a moment. "I'll be candid with you, Nathan. It is impossible for you to return at present—impossible. You could not find transportation; and even if you were able to undertake the journey on foot, this State is full of Rebel forces. My plan was that you should go with me to Philadelphia. I will place you in a proper hospital, and when I am cured you shall return with me direct to headquarters. I will serve as a sort of anchor," smiling, "for you to the old place; but without me, you would drift about here——"

"Like a bit ob rotten riber weed. Dar seems to be no place for me yet, in dis big world; I feel dat, suh."

Markle did not reply, and Nathan sat with his hands over his eyes. He looked up presently, with his ordinary humble quiet. "M's Markle, I spec' you is right; but it's hard, suh."

"I know it, Nathan; but trust yourself to me, I will see that you return when you are strong enough."

"'Seems as if we wos like chil'ren, allus," with a sigh. Both men were silent for some time, when Nathan turned abruptly. "Whar did you say you wos goin', suh?" hastily.

"To Philadelphia."

"It's dar dat Doctor Broderip lives, as M's Burley told you of?"

Markle did not answer, but turned his face to the wall, the heat fading out of it. Supposing he had not heard, Nathan raised his voice slightly. "A surgeon, suh, as M's Burley an' you wos speakin' of; I tink he wos to marry a lady you both know'd; I took particklar interest in dat."

"Yes."

"I tink, suh, when we goes dar, I'll find him; p'r'aps him an' I might hab some words to speak to one anoder; but God knows!"

"You had better go down to your bunk, Nathan," said Doctor Hall, authoritatively, putting his head in the door. "Jake is outside, here, to help you. Your master needs rest for the journey."

When they were all gone, and the door was shut, the little Lieutenant lay quiet a long time, his hands clasped under his head, his black, hawk like eyes fixed on the ceiling, the peculiar look which had come into his face at the first mention of Broderip's name deepening.

After a long time, he thrust his hand under the bolster and drew out a letter which he had received that morning—the scrawl of some old crony in the law offices and at evening dances, full of the town gossip. But it was only two lines which Markle found to read.

"Your old friend Conrad has met with fortune, or at least a chance to catch her skirts if he make good time. Boyd, the fellow who swindled him so thoroughly, has been arrested, in Philadelphia, and can be made to disgorge, they say, if he falls into tight hands; so the old man has gone on. Margaret is with her father, of course—silent and immovable as always. 'O rare, pale Margaret!'" The angry blood mounted into Markle's face; he tore the paper on which her name was desecrated into fragments. In his secret thoughts he had dared sometimes to softly call her "Margaret," and had blushed and shivered, when it was done, like a girl. This fellow, Cropps, took it into his tobacco-stained mouth as he would any public, paltry word.

Then the thought came back, that there was another man beside himself who some day might have the right to call her name, to touch her hand, to kiss her lips. The poor Lieutenant stiffened his

weak little body on the bed and laid his arm over his face, which every moment grew more pale.

"To-morrow," he said to Hall, looking up steadily at him, when they came, several hours afterward, to close the wards, "I will be ready. I find my strength returning with every beat of the pulse. I have work to do; I do not think I shall fail in doing it."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

RECOGNITION.

THE hospital in Philadelphia to which Markle was removed was a roomy, old-fashioned country house in the northern suburb, surrounded by thick woods and broad, green slopes. Dalton, a newspaper man, an old friend of his, from Dubuque, living then in the city, hurried there to welcome him the morning after his arrival.

"What can I do for you, George?" he asked, anxiously, for Markle's altered face, and a certain uneasy motion of the eye, alarmed him more than he chose to acknowledge.

"Nothing, except to provide for my servant's admission into some hospital; he cannot remain here, and he requires immediate care."

"I'll see to it. You said you had friends here; can I find them for you?"

Markle gnawed his lip. "No. What could I do? I am chained hand and foot by this disorder. God knows whether I will gather strength in time."

Dalton tapped his rattan against his boot, only by an unintelligible glance noting the irrelevant answer.

"Who are the physicians in attendance here?" demanded Markle, abruptly, after a pause. "Is Doctor Broderip among them?"

"I think not. I regard the fellow as a quack. You had no wish to put yourself under his care?"

"No; but I had a curiosity about the man. If I could see him I think I could test him—could tell what manner of metal he is of."

Dalton noticed that Nathan, who was lying on a pallet near them, waiting for removal, lifted his head and listened eagerly. One of the nurses, passing at the moment, stopped. "Doctor Broderip will pass the hospital grounds shortly, sir, if you wish to speak to him; he rode past at early dawn, toward the Wissahickon road; it is time now for him to return."

Dalton laughed. "I saw them; there was a party in a carriage. Broderip was in attendance on a pale, high featured girl—a singular order of beauty! It was when I was crawling home from the office, just as day lifted. The Wissahickon is a solitary little creek," turning to Markle with an explanatory tone, "where 'lovers

go together, two, ever, for company;' but in this case I noticed there was a blind old man with them."

Markle asked no further questions, but when Dalton was gone he dragged himself through the grounds to a seat under a walnut tree, close to the road along which Broderip and Miss Conrad must pass. It was a clear October day, warm with golden-tinted sunlight, the air scented from cut corn-fields and the neighboring cedar thickets, the outline of the forest trees about him defined, solid and dark, upon the grass at his feet, while the flying clouds overhead threw vapory waves of mist upon the sunny slopes of yellow stubble beyond, that came and faded over them, like mere dreams of shadow.

But Markle saw nothing but the quiet, country road, or lane, on the other side of the boundary fence beside him; did not turn, even, when Nathan limped along the path, and sat down on the grass, pulling his felt hat over his restless, hungry eyes, and then, putting his hands on his knees, took up his silent watch.

The day deepened into noon; a thorough Autumn day, gathering warmth and color and field-scents with every breath; a moist air stirred the half-dried, red leaves overhead, and sent them rustling to their feet. A bird, whose nest was in the lilac bushes near, twittered and hopped on the fence fearlessly, so absolute was the silence of the two men who sat patiently watching, hour after hour.

At length a floating cloud cooled and grayed the noonday, and just then a woman's clear laugh, followed by the roll of wheels, echoed along the shady, narrow lane. Markle started, as if to rise, and then sat quiet, almost concealed by the hedge in front of him. The mulatto was motionless.

It was a pretty, homelike picture which the next moment flashed into view; a low chaise, drawn leisurely by a pair of jetty ponies, in which a soldierly, gray-haired man, in coarse, brown clothes, sat stiffly erect, with a chubby boy between his knees, both of them looking at the lady who drove.

Margaret. The little Lieutenant started up, his eyes on fire, his cap lifted. But she did not look at him. The lines rested loosely in her hand, her head was bent, listening to some jest between her father and a small, spare man who rode beside her, dressed in a long, gray coat and shovel hat, like a Romish priest's. Her beauty struck Markle as unfamiliar, with a wonder akin to pain. She seemed to come into the fresh, splendid morning, and chord with it, as would the final triumphant note into a grand fugue. She might have been the type of the morning itself, with its few emphatic lines, its depth of light and color, its content to be idle in its strength. There was a change in her face, too, which made his heart sicken with jealousy; a look of dependence, of a happy subjection, new to it, as was the rose-flush struggling to her cheek and

the dewy brilliance of her down-cast eyes. Her lap was heaped with the feathery fern leaves which they had gathered among the hills. She broke and twisted them with one hand; and Markle noted that the eyes of the man beside her rested on it, and that its fingers trembled, as if even the blind matter in her flesh owned his power.

Broderip was on the side of the carriage nearest to Markle; the young officer leaned on the fence, looking up at him, reading his face as it never had been read before. Forgetting Margaret as he looked, he missed none of the coarser-featured, talking traits in it which made the surgeon's character a theme of street gossip; the cruel, inflated nostril the sensitive, indignant mouth—the hint of cunning and rapacity in the hazel eye. But he read more; for Broderip, unconscious of a spy, was looking at the one human being that he loved, and the soul of the man broke through the mean, vitiated flesh of its prison, and came to the light as a starving captive might to his cell window for light and air.

They passed slowly, giving him time for his scrutiny. He was a keen observer, apt to rely, too, on his first recognition of a new character. It seemed to him that the whole life of his rival opened to him in that first moment. He drew back, looking after the dust raised by their wheels, with a bitter defeat in his face.

"He is a better man than I," he muttered. He had expected to find him contemptible and paltry, with quackery stamped on him, he hardly knew why. With his disappointment, however, came secretly that healthy sense of satisfaction with which two finely-tempered blades strike each other, or one man of the true blood recognizes another, by the masonry of a glance, even in his enemy.

When the carriage and horse passed down the winding lane, he turned to regain the house; he had come down unassisted, but now he held by the fence for support. He stopped short: the mulatto stood before him, his hand dropped on his breast, his mouth open, his eyes full of tears, devouring the thin gray figure, disappearing in the distance, his face alive with exultation; his voice even was wiry, and beyond his control when he spoke.

"I'se must go to de oder hospital dis hour, suh—dis hour! Dar's a man dat I hev a message for!" He paused, putting his hands over his contorted face, subduing his voice, which had mounted into a piping cry.

Markle leaned more heavily against the fence, looking at Nat, who, for some strange reason, seemed to him more of the negro, and further removed from the white man at that moment than ever before. Some old unexplained words of Burley's, a perplexing flood of intangible fancies, a likeness that escaped when you traced it, rushed upon his brain, proving nothing, as he told himself with a sudden shiver, as if the day had grown chilly.

"What do you mean?"

"Dar's a man yonder. De Lo'd God hes put de lines on his life and mind togedder dis day -to-day, an' blessed be His name!"

Markle stood still. The doubt which had entered in the last moment into his mind, seemed to his clear sense of honor a ready treason to the man who was his rival; but he could not force it down. There came on the instant the sound of a horse's hoofs again up the lane. The carriage had stopped, and Doctor Broderip rode back for some trifle which had been dropped. He passed and repassed rapidly, glancing carelessly at the two men in the hospital grounds. His horse was a clean-built, thorough-bred mare, with delicate limbs, and head held high. It came close to the fence. Markle leaned forward with another purpose in his scanning of the thin-ribbed, erect figure, the marked face half hid by the wide-rimmed hat: the white hand that guided the horse, a diamond blazing at the wrist. Broderip, after he had paused, suddenly removed the hat to push back the black wisps of coarse hair from his face; and the mulatto, as if the motion he made was more than his control could bear, called out some word after him, in a husky whisper, then stopped breathless.

The surgeon drew his rein, listened for a moment, and then rode on. But his figure and face had been in the meantime in sharp relief in the full daylight, and Markle turned frowning away from it with a sudden sinking of his honest heart, as if he had listened to his own sentence for life read—a sentence from which there was no commutation.

Nathan followed Broderip with his eyes, until he reached the carriage, and bent over Miss Conrad with a smile; then he turned, rubbing his yellow, misshapen hands over each other.

"Ise 'll go now, wid your permission, suh. I'll send immediate for de man I must see, to come to de hospital."

Markle, left alone in the quiet of the sunlight, with no sound but the thrush picking at a twig, and a leaf falling now and then, walked with unsteady, slow steps, to and fro for a long time, with his head bent and brows knitted. He stopped at last, drawing himself erect, as one who had reached a decision that was final, and leaned idly over the fence rails, looking down into the sunny corn-field. But his face had altogether lost its color.

"I'll meet this Broderip on level ground," George Markle thought, his eyes full of sweet, healthy temper. "He has made a better fight with the world than I. I'll take no cowardly shelter behind the color of my skin. I'll keep his secret, by God."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE DAWN OF A NEW LIFE.

It was the surgeon's adopted son, Phil, who was in the carriage with old Mr. Conrad; it was Phil, in fact, who had planned the excursion; he found Doctor Broderip entered into it, as he did into all of his schemes now-a-days, as if they were only boys together. So the lad, who was a gay, affectionate, clean hearted little fellow, was master of the expedition, and the others followed his lead with the zest and keen enjoyment of silly trifles of children.

Not only Phil had noted the change in Broderip; the patients in the hospitals, Farr and Hubbard; the dullest servants behind his chair, felt the difference, as they would between a day of even sunshine and morbid, sultry weather. They ascribed it to different causes; but they all felt, dimly, that some trammel was thrown from him.

Burley had put the truth in coarse words. He had chosen finally what he held to be a man's right, to love and be loved. Whatever scruples had kept him from Miss Conrad, either reason or passion had conquered. It was not hard to regain his old footing with her father, when the old man was convinced of his sincerity. "And I think, Margaret, we've come to the root of the man at last; there's a different ring in his voice, and in his very steps on the floor. He's thorough grit, eh? I used to doubt it."

To which Margaret assented, but did not smile, dreamily, after the fashion of young girls when their lovers are talked of. Since their return, through all the Summer of pleasure and gratification which he had commanded about her (for the very air she breathed he would have made rare and delicate), she had felt day by day the magnetic, massive force of a stronger nature than her own pressing closer and closer to her. Her will, her opinions, her judgment, gave way; she shrank back, step by step, paler and weaker daily, her secret yet hid in her breast, before the steady, entering hand that would have dragged it from her.

Between the man and woman, however, there was, except on the most commonplace matters, absolute silence.

Broderip rose this morning, determined that the silence should end. To-day he would be born again. He was unusually quiet and composed in his motions; but Phil's eyes did not lighten with a more simple-hearted, eager smile. He went into the room they called his mother's while the stars were yet shining in the unbroken night, to bid her good-by. She peered into his face, moving the lamp that burned by the bed-head.

"There is no change in thy resolve, John?"

"No," smoothing the gray hair gently. She moved restlessly, smothering an anxious sigh

"Think of it," calmly. "I have carried patiently the accident of my birth, until the best years of my life are over. It was no fault of mine. It has been the old story of a dead body chained to a living man. I mean to bury it out of sight to-day. I mean to have a chance to breathe, and live, and love. I will stand up before God like other men."

She took his bony hand in hers and held it for a few moments to her wizened, babyish face. It was a rare sign of affection with her; then she bade him good-by tenderly, as any mother would, called him back to say it again, and to look up in his face with some incoherent words of encouragement, the tears in her queer, light eyes. But she did not say, God bless him, on his new path.

It was yet early dawn when they reached the little creek, and followed its solitary course through the heavily-wooded hills rising from its edge, about which yet hung the silvery mist. Swift, cold winds chafed their blood; the sky was filled with flakes of shining, flying cloud, broken from the masses which rose in the far horizon in solid crimson ramparts. They were a careless, merry party; sang, laughed because the laugh was ready, drove leisurely along under the overhanging trees, wet with dew, or scrambled up the hill-side to find scarlet and pink fungus, according to Master Phil's whim. The boy was a favorite with the old preacher, who indulged him in every foolish fancy. It was the first time Broderip had seen Margaret with a child. There was a motherliness about her, accepting Phil's incomplete notions with an earnest gravity, that brought a smile to his face.

Then came the long row up into the lonely silence of the river, the boat rippling the surface of the water into fretted silver, the briery vines laden with pink blossoms dipping on either side, the old man bending to his oars with "yos" and "halloos" that roused the yet sleeping echoes of the hills, the girl's cheek growing colorless as she sat next to Broderip, dragging her hand through the blue, cold water. And then breakfast, he, host of the little feast, in a room with the wet branches of the sycamore thrust in at the window, and just below, the gurgling drip, drip of a hill spring; the white table with its hot coffee and waffles and broiled chicken; the old man and the boy on either side of him, each of whom touched him so nearly, and the woman opposite, holding the house-mother's place.

It was home at last.

Miss Conrad remembered afterward that through all the gayety and novel zest of that fresh, fragrant morning, there had been an absence in Broderip's look and voice of the habitual nervous intensity, an almost solemn tenderness and quiet, as if the love and goodness of God came to him for the first time. When the morning was over and they were ready to return, he turned on his horse, looking

up into the solitude of the ravine with its walls of pines, the slow, clear water reflecting the pure blue above. "I am sorry to go home," he said, simply.

"You enjoyed the morning like a boy," she said.

He smiled. "A very knowing, foul one, then, coming home to feel his mother's hand on his forehead."

Mr. Conrad caught a word or two without the meaning, and soon after, as the wider road suffered them to ride abreast, said: "I have often wondered what make of woman was your mother, Doctor? I've always a curiosity to trace the forbears of men I know. The features of character don't descend as strongly marked as in horses, but very near. Now, you are like your mother, eh?"

Broderip did not answer for a moment, then said, with a laugh, that he could not tell. "My mother died when I was a boy, and our family was not one who thought it worth while to preserve their annals with care."

He fell behind for a while. When he rode up, his face was haggard, as if the dead body, which he had meant to bury, yet hung close to him. But if it did, he succeeded in thrusting off remembrance of it. Nothing should balk him of his new life.

It was near noon when they passed Markle and Nathan in the hospital lawn, and a few moments later stopped at the gate of Broderip's grounds, and went in to look at some monstrosity of a flower to please the gardener.

Lunch was spread in the breakfast-room, for which Mr. Conrad and Phil found they had an appetite, and, passing by the fruits and wine, they attacked the cold meat with a gravity which promised a lengthy seige.

"Remember, you come to me this evening," said Broderip, as they rose at last from the table. "I have no other guests; but I have found music that will satisfy you, Mr. Conrad. The ballad-singer H—— has promised to give you Scotch ditties until you cry, enough."

The old man drew himself up, coloring slightly, as if the costly favor irked him. "I'm obleeged to you, Doctor. Not," relaxing into a smile, "for the money paid, but for remembering my triflin' notions so long. It's onusual."

"No," gravely. "I have so few friends, I remember their whims as a woman would." He had accompanied them to the gate, before which their carriage stood, and stood with one hand on it, while Phil gathered a bouquet for Mr. Conrad. One of the footmen came up to him.

"A messenger, sir, from the hospital in Turner's lane. A colored man wishes to see you immediately. A wound, I believe, sir. They've removed him to—"

Broderip's face, which was unusually gentle at the moment

clouded. "Tell him it will be impossible. I will see him to-morrow. I have a capital operation at the almshouse at two o'clock. I would not have refused a kindness to a dog to-day, if I could have helped it," at which Mr. Conrad, to whom he spoke, smiled. The old man had a shrewd suspicion of what this day was to him. When he had assisted her father into the carriage, Broderip came back to Margaret. He looked beyond her as he spoke, and his hands were nervously clasped behind him.

"You will not refuse to come with your father this evening? I—there are a few words which I have wished to speak to you alone."

He thought it most tender to warn her; he trembled lest his passion should urge him to attack her with words of coarse strength and heat. Beyond measure, at that moment, her nature seemed to him delicate and frail; his own, vulgar and repellant. He must remember that; he must put the very remembrance of his origin out of his mind, lest it should taint his words and thoughts, and render him unfit for her.

Margaret bent her head. "I will come," she said, gravely. Her lips moved irresolutely.

"You said something more? I did not hear you," stooping breathlessly forward.

"No matter. Another time -another time," putting her hands hastily on Phil's shoulders, and stooping with pale face to kiss his mouth. When she was seated beside her father, she turned and held out her hand frankly to Doctor Broderip, an unusual motion with Margaret, and which with her had, somehow, the air of a trust given and received.

He held it a moment, looking up at her with craving eyes, a pathetic smile on the weak, thin jaws. He fancied that there was a trace of compassion in the look she turned back on him as they drove away. He walked, with Phil by the hand, into the house. As they passed through a thicket of privet, he looked, with quickened breath, down at the boy's red lips, half stooped suddenly, and then, without touching them, stood upright, coloring scarlet, as if he had been guilty of a breach of honor.

An hour or two afterward, he entered the room at the almshouse, where the operation was to be performed, his ordinary attendants, Farr and Hubbard, behind him, George Farr pushing closer than usual up to his demi-god. He never had known Broderip in the genial, gay humor of to-day; his very dress was of finer, softer texture; the perfume of wood flowers hung about him, his step was quick and light, his eye moved eagerly around in search of friendly recognition. Farr watched jealously the faces of the other physicians, to see how the change in his master was received. There were several of them present; the operation—

amputation at the hip joint—and the age of the patient, who was a sickly child of nine years, made the occasion one of unusual interest.

They gathered about the table when the little girl was brought in, leaving the space free for Broderip, whose appearance altered totally, as only a man's of strong muscles and extreme nervous power could do. He stood in his shirt-sleeves, the whole power and intelligence of the man centered in the keen, slow eye, fixed on the patient, while his fingers, firm as a steel machine, but tender as a woman's, adjusted the limb. When the child's poor, patched clothes were thrust aside, and the puny frame and pretty little face laid bare, a significant look of hopelessness passed from one to the other; but Broderip only grew a shade more sallow, and set his thin lips close.

Margaret was forgotten.

There was a profound silence, as one of the principal physicians applied the ether, and the surgeon took the instrument in his hand, hesitating a moment. There was always this pause before he began a capital operation; perhaps he prayed to whatever God he had for help. But to-day he looked up suddenly from the child to the men in front of them. It was almost certain death that lay in his hand for her in the next moment, and her life had been so hard—she was such a pretty, modest little thing! The great dumb part of his own life made this little stifled voice pitiful to him, as to no other. Clammy drops came out over his bony forehead. He took up the childish hand in his palm, looked at it a moment, and then kissed her face.

"Gentlemen will pardon me," he said, gravely, and began the operation. But there had been a silence like death in the room when he kissed her, and tears in more eyes than George Farr's.

She did not die under the knife. Broderip carried her to the dormitory, performing the nurse's part, as well as his own; and when the mother, a dumb, miserable-eyed woman in black came and stood by the bed, he spoke to her in a tone that was good cheer itself. "I think, madam, God will give me the little girl's life, and if He does, I mean it shall be a happy one."

It seemed to him as he rode back with bright eyes and bounding pulse, that all things had worked together to make the birthday of his new life happy and memorable.

Hereafter, perhaps, he could bring a history like this home to tell to one who would care for it more than he.

From some subtle impulse which he did not analyze, he turned out of his way in going home, into the region of Baker and Bedford streets, a quarter which he had carefully avoided before. It is the deepest depth of the filth and iniquity of Philadelphia. He drew up his horse at the corner of Ninth and Mary's streets, and

deliberately rode from one end to the other of the latter. It was going down into Gehenna. He missed nothing: the stench, the rancid, broken victuals exposed for sale, the swarms of drunken blacks lying on the pavements and gutters like flies in the sun, a few filthy rags covering their bestial limbs, turning bleared eyes and blubber lips toward him as he passed. Was it the mysterious instinct of race that had drawn him there on *this* day, when he was going to forswear it and his birth-wrong forever? Be that as it may, at any other time his fastidious white blood (and there were but few drops of any other in Broderip's veins) would have sickened here through every sense; but to day a stronger emotion than disgust sharpened his face as he looked at the negroes, a sense of kinship and brotherhood, a fierce denial that his race must necessarily come to this if left free and unguided. His race! He stopped again, looking back at these negroes as they had come out of the slave pens of the South, only to find in freedom a wider path to hell; he knew that, a square or two distant, there were thousands of others struggling to rise, a respectable, industrious, God fearing class as any in the North, yet trampled under foot by the law, and society finding in the mere color of their skin a disgrace which white criminals and harlots held beneath their shame. Why should this wrong call to him to-day for redress, in a voice so urgent and terrible?

His puny body dilated with a man's indignation from the height to which he had raised himself; it seemed as if every one of these black or yellow faces turned an appeal to him for help "God!" he muttered as he rode away, "They have had hard measure! And John Broderip has turned his back on them with the rest, a cheat and a coward!"

He slackened his pace presently, however, scanning the streets in his usual, moderate, grave manner. George Farr, who was lingering in the surgeon's room for a word, when he arrived, noted, however, a subdued excitement in his voice and eye as he sat down to glance over the book of entries, pen in hand. Looking up abruptly, he said without preface,

"I begin to see the meaning of that old story of Jesus of Nazareth, Farr, in which you put such faith. To put ease and ambition and woman out of life, to give life itself for the salvation of a race—that was the highest manhood. But," with a shrug, "it needed the strength of a God!"

"No. The sacrifice is not a rare one."

"Eh? How?" turning on him. (Farr was the only one of Broderip's pupils of whom he made a companion, because he was not afraid to differ with him.)

"The sacrifice has been imitated in every age, sir; every day now, by the men who go into the war to free the negroes."

Broderip wrote on in silence. When he had finished the page he looked up with absent, contracted eyes. "White men who give their lives for the negro? White men?" he said, thoughtfully, closing the book. Farr was too much used to his incoherence to wonder or question, and followed him as he went silently on his rounds.

It was nearly dark when he had finished, and coming out, mounted his horse again, glancing at his watch with kindling eyes. It was but an hour until he should see her. Whatever alien doubts had tormented him to-day, with the wakening of the old blood in him, had vanished. He sprang from the saddle at his gate, throwing the bridle to the groom, and ran up to his own chamber with dilated nostrils and set lips. The long fast was over; life's costliest wine waited for him; it needed but to thrust out his hand now, to grasp it.

CHAPTER XXXV.

A MAN'S CHOICE.

The house was softly lighted, and filled with flowers; Doctor Broderip, coming down and pacing up and down the long suites of rooms, waiting for his guests, stirred their faint, fresh perfume in the air, and stopped now and then to rearrange a vine or cluster of lilies whose faulty position caught his eye. The quiet self-possession which often precedes a crisis in life had come to him. He was dressed in his ordinary coarse, old-fashioned, gray clothes, except that with an odd fancy, which might have been that of a girl, the garments he wore were all new: if there were any uncleanness in the old self which he forswore to-night, he thrust it from him, even in paltry superstitious symbols such as this. When a quick step in the hall told the approach of his guests he turned his back to the door, looking up at a picture to give himself time for breath, straining his ears to catch the first sound of her footfall. It was only a servant who entered, however.

"Mr. Conrad has not arrived, sir," hesitated the man. "It is a patient, a colored man; I had to promise to inform you. He is in the operating-room. He's very weak, sir," apologetically.

"What does that matter? You know the rules," with a scowl and nod of dismissal. "But stop, Robert!" as the man went out. "Colored, you said? I have an hour," looking at his watch. "After to-night you will be more strict; my business in future must be kept out of my leisure hours."

He passed through the rooms, entering the little matted antechamber into which the conservatory opened, and pushing a half-

glazed door ajar, went into a long, uncarpeted apartment, at the other end of which, by the bright light of a low gas-burner, Nathan sat, on a bench, waiting.

Broderip paused inside of the door, closing it slowly as his hawk eyes scanned the figure with unusual intentness. The mulatto stood up, smiling, and bowing humbly again and again. He had dressed himself with unusual care, with a vague notion of doing his brother honor; a gaudy waistcoat and broad shirt-front displayed themselves glaringly under Major Bob's shabby dress coat; the shoes were blacked until they shone again, although the bare feet showed through them; the glass earrings yet dangled on each side of the thin, starved face; he held his hat in one hand, with the other, as he bowed, laid on his bald head.

The room was long; the surgeon came toward him with a quick, decisive step, which grew slower as he approached, and stopped some paces away from him, in the shadow. He clasped his hands behind him, and stood a moment silent, then, in a quieter tone than ordinary,

"You wished to see me, sir?"

Nathan bowed again, turned his hat round in his hand, with a sound between a hysterical chuckle and a cry, glancing furtively sideways at the man before him. Seen closer the features were unfamiliar. The terrible doubt met him that, after all, he had been mistaken.

It would be best to delay—to make sure.

"I'se is not strong, suh, ef you'll 'scuse me," when he tottered and caught by a table. "I'se come a long way wid a wound hyur," touching his arm. "It's not bin 'tended to so berry well. Dey is'nt p'ticklar wid men of my cullor." He hesitated, stammered and broke down. There was no reply. The stern, unsmiling face before him gave him no aid.

"I'se come from Alabama, suh," with a keen and bolder glance of scrutiny. "When I seen you dis mornin'," gaining courage as he went on, and enunciating slowly, "I tought you'd not slight a black man for his cullor. I sent fur you, and when you not come, I find my way hyar. I tought, no matter how learned you was, you'd not slight a black man fur his cullor."

"You wished me to examine your wound?" slightly passing by whatever covert meaning Nathan had tried to put into his repeated words.

"Yes, Mars." He began to pull off his coat slowly. But without knowing it, he came closer step by step, his mouth open, his famished eyes fixed on Broderip, holding his breath. It was almost certain to him now that he had made a mistake. "Suh," he said, holding out one hand as if begging, "I'se a slave. I'se bin kep from father and brother, wife and child, most ob my life. I'se

libed alone. I'se tought for many years ob de time when I'd meet agin wid dem dar." He leaned forward, looking into the hard, grave face for answer. None came.

"I'se come off ob Mars Jeems Streblin's place, suh."

There was an imperceptible shadow at the name in the baffling, hazel eyes, gone in an instant. But it did not escape the mulatto's watchful gaze. "My name's Nathan, suh. I'se got no oder to gib my wife and child," with a feeble laugh.

"You have had hard fortune, Nathan. But there are many men who never have had wife or children to call their own," in a slow, mechanical voice.

"Yes, suh, among our people. Dah's my father, suh. He an old man, now," with the same probing glance. "He's growed gray-headed alone—neider wife nor children. If he is made free de fust ob de year he'll be left a miseble beggar after all his hard work; and he don't know if his sons is libin or dead, to go to them for help."

Broderip made a quick, irresolute motion, a spasm passing over his face. "The old man is yet alive?" he asked.

It was the question of Joseph to his brethren, as Nathan remembered with a sudden heat in his blood. "I tink he is alive," doubtfully. "I've heerd a great deal ob his work when he was young. He was wonderful handy wid de fingers; and times when I tink ob his bein an old, no-account nigger now, kicked round for bein ob no use, an' me strong and hearty, it makes me nigh mad, suh, to 'member dat tings is so—dat I'se chained, as you might say, an' can't help him; God knows I'se willin'."

Broderip looked at the man—at the ridiculous dress and uncouth figure, and the simple, earnest face; then he glanced at his own person, which bore in every member and gesture the signs of refinement and long culture. There was a critical, bitter self-mockery upon his face. But he said nothing: drew out the drawer of a cabinet and took out a case of instruments and bundles of lint, laying them on the table. Nathan glanced at them carelessly. Wound or operation mattered little to him, compared to the doubt racking his brain. He wiped his forehead, coughed, began again his groping, futile efforts to wrench the man's secret from him.

"'Pears to me, suh, if de people ob my cullor had been true men dey'd have righted dis matter ob slavery demselves. Dey'd have claimed dere just wages, and edication, and dere own kinsfolks. De harder de life are, de more dem as am our brudders counts to us."

Doctor Broderip bowed assent, motioning to him to remove his shirt sleeve, and inspecting the mangled arm with careful, grave eyes. When he laid his fingers on the yellow flesh, a shiver passed

over him, which Nathan noted. Was it likely that a man whose trade this was should turn away, with sick, sunken hollows about his eyes and jaws, at the sight of a stranger's blood? But he looked beyond the surgeon to the window in the far door, through which he dimly caught a glimpse of the soft-tinted lights, silken curtains, and a fairy-land of flowers, and the dull amazement and perplexity came back into his face; he shrank into himself, remained silent, humble, and cowed.

The surgeon found the wound neglected, unskilfully dressed at first, and refusing to heal from want of vitality in the patient. He placed him on a lounge, going about the work with cold fingers and a rigid, meaningless face. "You must control yourself," as he unrolled a bandage, "I am going to give you pain for a moment, but your life is in danger."

"I'se not afraid, suh," keeping his eyes on the face brought nearer to his own.

Once, during the operation, he lost sense and breath. Doctor Broderip stopped, stiff and silent as a pillar of stone, looking down at him as if it were his own ghost that lay before him. The strange likeness between them in that moment of quiet came out clear and undoubted. The older man at last drew a heavy breath and opened his eyes. But they met only the unmoved face of the surgeon, busy with his work.

At that moment there came a sound of voices in the drawing rooms, dulled by distance—voices with the indescribable cadence about them which belongs to thorough breeding, a random chord or two of music, the soft flutter and rustle of women's dress. Broderip looked up quickly across the ghastly wound and mulatto's body at the distant light, as if the sounds reached him from some world with which he had nothing farther to do. The sounds were few and trivial, but as a scattered note or two will suggest a perfect harmony, they brought a whole life of grace and beauty before both men.

"I'se keepin' you from your friends, suh," with an uneasy movement; "let dat arm alone. I'se oughtn't to hev come; I wur mistaken 'bout some tings. You ought to be in yander, 'pears to me.

"No, my place is with you, Nathan," his hard face breaking up into a smile, more weak and pitiable than the slave's.

"You's one dat knows your duty, Doctor Broderip," cheerfully.

"Yes, I know it," lifting one hand slowly to pass over his forehead.

The sounds came nearer—Phil's shrill voice, a woman's low laugh. The whole outer man may be a mask, but the laugh betrays the secret; this was curiously innocent and sincere. Nathan turned as he heard i , with a brightening of his simple face, but the surgeon kept his eyes fixed on the wound. Through the far

door Nathan saw the boy pulling bits of a vine that hung from the roof of the conservatory, and the fairest woman he had ever seen standing below, waiting for them. Looking back at Broderip, he found that his eyes were on her now, hard and dull. Her lithe figure, in its thin, white robes, was in front of the wall of brilliant flowers, her bare arms were held up, her whole action was free and careless as he had never seen in her before. There was color glowing through the solid ivory flesh, a tender, noble child's heart looking through the pure face, waiting for the call of its master.

Broderip stood up, the steel probe in his hand.

His wife, waiting for his strong arm, for the tenderness and passion gathered and barred within his breast in his solitary life; all his recompense waiting with her; all the world of goodness, and culture, and beauty into which he had fought his way during these years, waited, it seemed to him, with her on that side of the thin, glass barrier. On this side, what? With the few black drops that made him kin to this creature, looking up at him with a brute's intelligence in his eyes—the fortunes of his race. There was no middle ground. Let him acknowledge the mulatto as his brother, and he stood alone, shut out from every human relation with the world to which he belonged. A negro—no wealth, no talent, no virtue could wash out that stain or put him on a level with the meanest servant in his house again.

He bent to his work, his hands moving swiftly; Nathan made no whimper under the torture they gave, but his brain was touched; his jaw fell presently, and he began to wander childishly in his talk. He had little physical strength left to cope with this new strain. The thought of which his mind was full babbled out presently. Looking straight into Broderip's face, with the recognition he had not dared to hint before, he said:

"I'se uncertain, suh, if you'se my brother or not. 'Seems as if you could'nt be de lad dat rode off wid M's Jeems, waving his ole cap back to me, lookin' out of de stable window. It's bin years an' years, and I neber done forgot dat peart little chap. I tought I'se had found him again. 'Pears to me dat de disappointment to-night was de hardest ob my life." He took one of the surgeon's delicate hands into his yellow, horny palms, pulling it with a slow, hopeless motion. The surgeon drew it away with the same subtle reaction of feeling that had come to him this morning among the squalid blacks. They were his own. Whether he loathed or respected the black skin, the mysterious sympathy of race (as real in Broderip's puny frame as the red ligaments that bound it together), made it more familiar than any other; the whole bond of childhood and its associations brought it close. He never touched one of his own people without a quick throb of kinship beneath all of the shame or all of the disgust.

In the room without, Phil whistled some simple air, and Margaret, as she arranged her flowers, sang carelessly a broken verse of the song—a sweet, mellow little ditty, such as she might carol over her sewing, or lull a baby to sleep with. It brought strange pictures, long hid in Broderip's hungry heart, before his eyes. He looked at her long and earnestly, and then, with the calmness of settled purpose, down at Nathan.

There was an artery which had been tied; the ligature, though sufficient, was slight; there was a keen little knife that lay upon the bedside. One touch of its blade, and his secret was safe forever. He stretched out his hand for it.

The gas light above them threw a ring of light about the couch; a sudden current of wind jarred the flame, and threw uncertain shadows about them. Broderip shivered nervously—glanced up with an oath. To his superstitious fancy it had taken life to delay him.

"Let me adjust that bandage; it binds you?"

"Dat's so," with an uneasy shift of his body. "Kin you reach it, Doctor," straightening his arm for Broderip's convenience, talking on in the same drowsy, half unconscious monotone. The surgeon heard keenly, and comprehended, while he untied the first tie of the knot. The room directly overhead was that of the invalid. Was it a morbid fancy, or did he hear a warning cry of "John! John!" Her childish old face was thrust like a shadow between him and Nathan. His sight was clouded. He put his hand to his eyes. "It was no use, old friend," he thought; "the brute is a brute still." Reason or the devil hastened to supply his brain with other defence. Never before had they found it so cool, alert, electric with vigor, as in that second of time, while he stood balancing the knife on his hand, waiting for the flickering light to grow steady. He had a right to his manhood—a right. How could he bring his faculties and needs into the bound allowed this negro's life? It was self-murder.

"A narrow life demands a narrow soul," he quoted aloud, looking at Nathan with a cynical smile, which faded, leaving his lips blue and contorted. His eyes searched his brother's face; he remembered that it was for the last time.

A simply dull perplexed face, for Nathan was trying to understand the words which he supposed were addressed to him.

"I don't know any narrerer way of livin' than in slavery," he said patiently; "dough I hadn't a hard master, suh. But it's de loss—de loss ob ebery ting. Howsever, I'se goin' back dar."

The light had steadied now—the knife was firm in his fingers; yet Broderip stood dully repeating the last words. A trifle; but it kept back the last moment. "You are going back?"

"Yes, Massa, I'se 'll take my chance. I can't lib on de milk

and honey hyur, while de ole man, and Anny, and de boy is yander. If I find 'em I tink God is good; but if not—if so be as dey 's lost to me—I 'se sees dat de best of de white men hyur is goin' to C'ar'lina, fightin' for my people yet in slavery; and I 'se'll gib my life long wid de rest. Dah's nuffin better I kin do wid it."

The scarlet blood dyed Broderip's face and throat; he looked at his brother with an astonished doubt in his eyes.

"You mean that you —*you* would give your life for your people? Mankind has hardly used you well enough, I should fancy, to educate you for a hero."

"I donno, suh, what you mean by dat," after a moment's hesitation. "De white men hes kep me like a brute in my life, dat's clar, but dey kent hinder me from dyin like a man," turning wearily on his side.

Doctor Broderip drew himself slowly up from a stooping posture, with a heavy breath, like one awakening from a sleep. There was an instant's pause, and then a slight click like a lancet or a knife shut. "Like a man—A MAN, and the brute would be left behind?" he said under his breath.

Nathan, half asleep through pain and exhaustion, fancied the voice was one familiar to him when he was a boy. After a long while the surgeon's hands began to move about him again gently, and the sallow face, when it bent over him, was transfigured with the strength and nobility of a great thought. A touch at the bottom of the maelstrom will send the doomed man to the upper life again; and that chance word of poor Nat's had struck Broderip's soul out of its murderous depths into the free light and air. He put his hand on the mulatto's broad, melancholy forehead and held it there a moment. Nat smiled humbly, when he took it off, at this remarkable token of the great man's kindness. He never knew what that touch meant to him.

"What can a man do more than this, that he should give his life for his friends?" he heard Broderip say in the indistinct distance to which all about him was dully withdrawing. "Better that than wife or child."

The little man lying on the lounge roused at the words, thrusting one arm uneasily under his bald head, "It's de best work for a man, I spose, suh; but, O my God! if I could only see Anny and de boy agin."

There was no reply; but the fingers at work with him moved quick and deftly; the relief was soothing as an opiate; before Broderip had his work done, the mulatto was wrapped in a sleep heavy as death. The surgeon went through the routine of putting his instruments in a case and washing his hands like an automaton; then he came back, and, throwing a cloak over the sleeper, lowered the gas and stood listening to the faint swell of music that ebbed

and flowed through the room, and looking down at him with a smile of mastership in his hard face.

His secret was still his own—his fate in his own hands. He could send this man back to the hospital to-night, his quest baffled, and turn his back forever on him and his race. He went nearer to the door, glancing into the matted little room, walled with flowers. It was vacant now; but the soft lights, the perfume, the pure air, waited for their mistress, he thought. Once let him rid himself of this man, and it needed but a word to bring her there, to tell her the long delayed story of his love, to receive in her reward and atonement. "Let him rid himself of this man"—his brother. John Broderip stooped and picked up the hand of the man he meant to murder half an hour back, scanning it—scanning the meek face, with its gray ragged fringe of hair, combed smoothly down over the temples; the bent back, which had felt the lash, with his own weak chin quivering, and the subtle likeness to the slave, growing more perceptible each moment, in his yellow face and stooped body. Something stronger than selfishness or pity, gripped his soul at that moment and moved its currents, as the rivers of water flow at the will of the king's hand—nature, instinct, blood, what you will—a something which made John Broderip and his life and wants seem but a part which he had acted in a comedy; and the boy Sap in the stables, with his animal pleasures and his animal discontent, the only real life to him.

"Brother, brother," he said aloud, testing the sound. For twenty years there had been no such tie between him and any human creature. He laughed as he said it—an eager, credulous laugh. He was not ashamed of this sleeping wretch, of the coffee-colored skin and clown's clothes. They had used him as a brute, but they could not hinder him from discovering what true manhood was. "Better than I," said John Broderip—"better than I."

How the poor devil had clung to him, too! After this half a life had gone, following up the boy Sap, with love such as John Broderip's gifts or skill had never been able to buy for him. Never—not even from Margaret? He would test that. At the thought his very lips whitened. Could he dare that?—to test her with the truth?

There had never been a time since he had been brought face to face with Margaret Conrad's blunt, truth-telling nature, when this thought had not underlaid his love and passion for her. A certainty that the truth would be an eternal barrier between them, and justly so; yet a mad impulse to tell it to her, which he had felt for no other since he assumed his disguise. To-night, the night when he meant to woo from the secret depths of her soul the evidence of her love for him, when he meant to touch her lips at last to his, to feel her heart beating against his own, weak and famished,

which had never known the love of woman, the desire to be true to her, to strike down the damnable lie in which he moved, became maddening.

Why! even this poor hostler took up the burden laid on him -dared, owning himself black, and a slave, to find out a heroic use for his life! He did not patch it into a miserable sham, a perilous imitation of the white man's.

He stood looking through the shadow at the little room, the centre of light and color, from which issued a strain of soft, enervating music. Another voice made itself audible in it. Why should he sacrifice her life and his own to a morbid scruple? He was safe; the danger, averted to-night, was gone forever. Why should he voluntarily drag the fate of his race upon him? Why? There was no hope that she would marry him knowing what he was. The instinct that held the races apart was unconquerable, and in no one had he known it stronger than in Miss Conrad.

For one moment Broderip stood motionless, his back to the distant light, looking at the sleeper before him. In that moment the two paths of life opened clearly before him, and he made his choice. He looked up quietly. "Better be Sap in the shambles," he said, "than the trickster I have made of John Broderip."

Stopping by the lamp as he passed it, he drew out from his breast the string of rose-colored shells which Margaret had given him. How pure and clean they were! That first morning they had seemed fitting to her, he thought; since he knew her longer, in God's earth he thought there was nothing so pure and true as she; she had given them to him. He opened his jacket and laid them in their hiding-place again, with a pleased smile, such as a child might give. "No matter what color God gave me, I'll make myself fit to keep her gift," he said, as he buttoned the gray coat, and, pushing back the hair from his damp forehead, went out through the dimmed and quieted room to find her. The little gift was all that belonged to her which he should ever possess, he thought; yet he went out with his usual quiet, grave step, and head uplifted.

Having touched shore, whatever of this life's hope might be taken from him to-night forever, the lie in which he had lived was gone, and his feet were firm. Black or white—Margaret his wife or taken from him—these he felt were outside trifles; in his soul he faced God, at last, an honest man.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

ISHMAEL.

DOCTOR BRODERIP'S few guests were gathered in the music-room when he entered and stood silently behind Mr. Conrad's chair. There were cheerful lights and cheerful faces; two or three middle-aged men and women, who, having been once elected the surgeon's friends, had the freedom of his house, and used it as their own. The air was moved by a low voice, sobbing out in a tone that hardly broke its silence—a lament full of unhopeful, fitful complaint; one of those simple little airs which seem to hold the sad secret of every soul, and utter it audibly. Even old Conrad's blind eyes were closed under their spectacles, and his clean-shaven jaws were a trifle paler as he listened. But Margaret, with Phil beside her, beat regular time to all its moaning, with her firm fingers on his freckled little hand.

Broderip, greeting them all when the song was over with his usual ceremonious mannerism, passed her with a bow, without looking up, his lips moving but making no sound. During the song it had seemed to him that they stood alone in the world together; that that terrible cry had torn out the secret of his love and showed it to her; and his heart beat naked, feeble and ashamed before her. When the necessary civil words were said, and they began to scatter in groups through the rooms, he stopped again by Mr. Conrad, with one hand on the back of his chair.

"A poor negro patient, Robert told us, detained you?" turning his head back. "I hope you were able to satisfy him?"

"I relieved the physical pain," in a dry, unnatural tone. "To-morrow I will give him more effectual aid." He took up a goblet of water, and drank it.

Mr. Conrad turned quickly, and put his hand on the then feverish wrist resting on his chair. "You are ill, Broderip."

"No; I never felt stronger in body than to-night."

But the old man's blind face still turned on him with the sagacity of a listening hound. He made no comment, however, but leaving him presently, went into the library, where Phil was turning over for Margaret a portfolio of engravings, and, nodding back to where the surgeon stood, whispered anxiously,

"What trouble is in his face, Meg?"

Miss Conrad frowned impatiently, but did not lift her eyes. "None," she said, dryly, "but dyspepsia, and the unhappiness of a man who is not sure of himself."

"So? Perhaps you are right; you've a keen eye, and your feelings don't blind you," with a tinge of bitterness. "You'd turn the black spot in your father's or lover's heart to the light as coolly as that of your enemy; and your own, to be just to you, Meg."

She did not answer, but the wide mouth was set more firmly, and the eyes grew gray. "I am not a hard woman," she said, quietly.

"Now that man's wiry, sharp voice to-night," continued her father, disregarding her, "may seem ordinary to you, but it's the cry of one going down into deep waters to me. If it was any other man I'd offer my help. I've dragged in many a poor fellow ashore out of the slough—money troubles, or character gone or them tolin' out into the black sea, away from Christ, and the under-tow getting stronger and stronger. Under God, I've dragged them in."

"Why do you not offer your help now, then?"

Conrad shook his head. "No," he said, slowly, "no," with an anxious distress in his good-tempered, vigilant face. When Broderip followed him, and came up beside them, he said nothing, only laid his heavy hand on the stooped shoulder. Miss Conrad did not turn her head. As she bent over the table or stood erect again, the folds of her dress swept against him. When he had curbed and denied himself for life, as he thought an hour ago, he had not counted on the reaction of seeing her again. He stood looking at her until the blood rose into her throat and face, and she turned with a shy, conscious smile. His own face was grave and unanswering, his hands clasped behind him. He could have dragged her up where she stooped before him into his breast, never to loose her again.

"Will you take my place as host, Mr. Conrad, and suffer me to see your daughter alone?" he said, gravely.

"Surely, surely; she will go with you, Doctor Broderip," gravely. There was something more than the tremor of a lover here. "Come Phil, let us find these people," leaving them alone.

Broderip led her across the room to an open gallery. His hand was on her arm; how white it was—white. His was another color! A few hours back and this woman was as part of himself; he was going to build a barrier between them which not even death could destroy.

The gallery which they had entered was but a narrow porch, shut off from the gardens by lattice-work; he stopped at a door opening out, and let her arm fall, shivering from the contact. "Will you come outside?" he said. "There is an impure smell indoors, I fancy, to-night, and the fresh air is better for a sickly story such as I must tell you, Miss Conrad."

"I am willing," she replied. But neither moved. Outside they would have lost sight of each other's face. A lamp which hung in the roof above swung to and fro, in the cool night wind that rushed past them through the open door, throwing broad, flickering shadows on the floor. Miss Conrad bent forward; there was no shy consciousness now in her face; she knew it was no whisper of love she had come to hear; the woman within her, whom no one, with all her surface bluntness, ever had known, looked out now from her strongly-marked features and gray, probing eyes, ready for her trial. But the gray eyes were moist and brilliant, the lips tender, the breath milky sweet that heaved her breast. Broderip saw nothing more. He stooped and took up one of her hands, looked at it as he might at a holy relic, and let it fall gently. What would she say when she heard his story? She was stronger than other women, if love could conquer prejudice.

Then he cursed himself for the hope; a feeble, maudlin hope, and that he knew.

In the moment they were there, one or two men inside noticed the surgeon's small figure as he stood in the doorway, his lean, singular face photographed yellow and sharp against the night, under his broad-rimmed hat. "A man to whom fortune had been perversely kind," they said, looking at the beautiful woman beside him.

"We will go out," he said to her, in the same dry, hard tone, leading the way. He did not offer her his hand; even avoided looking at her again. All the hunger and passion starved through his life rose in that hour, and fought against the resolution with which he had bound himself, as Samson against the green withs.

There was but a low, half-moon that night, and the light it made on the wide spaces without was faint, and the shadows heavy. Even the flag on the peaked roof over their heads fluttered dim and unreal in the grayish-blue air. He led her to an open, grassy flat, where the light fell clearest, standing with his own face toward it, however, and hers in shadow, thinking that she would choose it so. But she sat down on a cedar stump, and drew her shawl closer over her broad shoulders, turning her face barely up to his. He saw there what he had never seen before. She had been inscrutable to him hitherto, but he knew now that the key was in the lock, and his hand upon the key.

"Once before, Miss Conrad, I asked you to listen to a story I wished to tell you."

"I know," quietly.

"You know what it was? You knew, then, perhaps?"

She did not blush; but she pushed the hair from off her temples with both her hands, her eyes avoiding his, her breath coming quick and hard.

"It was in that little flower-closet, yonder," pointing to where

the light and colors of the greenhouse shone hazily in the prevailing dulness. "There. I have gone into it sometimes as if it were holy ground, since that night. To save me. Because I meant to take on myself a lie for life."

She looked at him now. "You intended," she said, slowly, "to tell me that night that you loved me. That was no lie; you never were so true a man as when you loved me best."

"No, Margaret," with a patient, sad smile. "And I never loved you so well, or was so near to reaching the manhood for which I have been struggling all my life, as to-night, when I mean to put you from me."

"There is one word which it is but just for me to say," said Miss Conrad, earnestly, rising and standing before him. "The answer I would have given you then, I would give you now. No action or word of yours since; no"—she hesitated—"no fact of your past life can change my feeling toward you."

He made a step forward, with breathless lips, and eyes that lighted dangerously, then drew back, raising his hand to command silence. She drew back, astonished and pale. Whether she had loved or merely borne with John Broderip, she had been used to regard him as weak-willed, akin to hysteric women; but she faced now the pain and decision of a stronger man than she had ever known, and it cowed her.

"Do not tell me what your feeling for me was. No matter what the knowledge would be to me; some day you would bitterly regret that I possessed it."

She did not reply. The wind blew gustily past, flapping the spectral flag overhead. His voice, strangely altered, broke the silence. "I think you surmise what my history is, Miss Conrad, or you would not have hastened to hold out a helping hand to-night."

"I do, Doctor Broderip," in a low voice. "I have done so since I first knew you. I think that at one time in your life you committed a crime. There have been times when I knew the story was on your lips to tell me. I always knew that the day would come when you would trust me, and I should hear it." She held out her hands, looking up at him. He took them; they slept in his with an utter quiet and trust; he stooped, his hot breath touched her forehead.

"Margaret, if I came to you now, guilty, you would not take your hands from mine? Stay," when she would have spoken. "Think one moment before you answer me."

Because she saw in his face that the decisive moment of life for both of them had come, Miss Conrad's breath grew cool and even, and she met his eye with the straightforward bluntness of a man. When the time comes for her to die it is probable she will be most moderate and composed.

"I am no judge. Whether I loved or pitied a man, no guilt of his would change me," she said; then stopping a moment, she added, as if the words were wrung from her lips one by one, "If I had been a man, and that side of my nature which has been kept hidden had been brought into temptation, Doctor Broderip, there is no crime which I could not have committed. None."

Her pure, noble face grew colorless as she said it, and she struck her breast as if she would have bared to him whatever foul possibilities lay there, known only to God and herself.

He stood looking down at her, the pale, austere face in the shadow of the broad shovel hat he wore. "You are honester than other women, and stronger. Your strength has made me fancy that you would break down the barrier between us. But that was folly. You will at least speak truth to me."

She put her hand up to her dry lips. "I will speak the truth. What is the barrier?"

His self-control curiously returned to him. "Come with me, I have something to show you. I will tell you as we go," bending courteously as he walked beside her along the narrow path.

"I have committed no crime, Miss Conrad. My fault lies in that I was born below the level of humanity. What other men do from belief in God, I did to raise myself to their starting-point. I have worked hard to keep myself clean. I hoped," with a bitter laugh, "to slough off the animal some day, and bring the man out from it."

"There is no poverty of birth, nor hereditary vice which could warrant such words," she said, sharply.

Broderip smiled. They stopped at a door leading into the operating-room. He opened it. Nat lay asleep under the dully-burning gas-light.

He looked at her, drawing a long breath, as a man might who turns from the shore, and goes down into the unknown sea never to return.

"It was a poor birth, yes. But there was no hereditary vice. My parents were clean, honest, pious Methodists. But they were black. The man lying yonder is my brother." He stopped, raising his hand to his forehead. "What he is, Miss Conrad, I am. On the first of the year, a freed slave. Nothing more."

She neither spoke nor moved; although she stood close beside him, her face was hidden from him by her position. He waited; the folds of her dress and heavy shawl were still as if she had been a statue.

"Margaret!"

He laid his hand on hers, which hung by her side. It was cold; a shiver crept over her powerful frame as he touched her. When she turned her head, her eyes were dull, and her face stony.

The door was closed on him.

"Nathan! Nathan!" he cried, in a shrill, rasping voice. "I have my brother, I have my own people!" fiercely pushing down her hand that grasped him. "I would have married you if you had been a fiend from hell!"

Miss Conrad stood quiet; she saw that she was alone after a moment, and discerned his thin, dark figure in the dusky light, leaning against a stone wall that barred in the grounds. Whether she suffered any pain beyond pity, as she stood there afterward, looking into the dully lighted room at the sleeping mulatto, only Margaret Conrad ever will know. It was a long time before she went to him.

"Doctor Broderip, I promised to speak truth to you," tapping gently on his shoulder.

He turned, a sad, half-smiling patience on his face, which afterward strengthened into its habitual expression.

"I pray you to accept this disappointment with composure. We all have some cross of circumstance to bear. I would not whimper under mine," with her old motion of putting her fingers on her blue, cold lips.

"You shouldered yours bravely," seeing that he did not speak. "It was a man's action—a man's—and I honor it. But the gulf between us is one which God never intended to be crossed."

Already he perceived there was the gentle quality in her tone of one who makes an explanation to her inferior.

"The prejudice against the black blood seems senseless to you, Doctor Broderip, but I would have to let my own out, drop by drop, before I could eradicate it," with vehemence. "It is a thing which will exist while the two races endure. I cannot fight against nature."

"No, Margaret." It was noticeable that since he had come out from his long-worn lie he had called her by her first name; his tone had been that of one who stood on level ground with her.

"It is better we should not meet again," she said.

"Yes." He looked from her down the long, vacant strip of road that ran from the wall straight before him. Good God! *how* vacant it was! And long -long. Different from —— And then for a few moments he ceased to wonder or to think, and stood quite quiet, his mouth resting on the hand that clasped the rough stone. When he looked up she was watching him, her large figure drawn to its full height, her face bloodless, and her burning eyes, he fancied, accusing and implacable. Was there any irreparable hurt which he could have given to this strong-bodied, moderate-minded woman? He put the idle fancy from him.

He drew out the string of shells she had given him, holding them up in the faint light before handing them to her, as a mother

might look at the toys of her dead child. "The day you put these in my hand," he said, slowly, "I thought that it only needed the love of such a woman as you were, Margaret, to complete my work; to wipe out all traces of the brute, and make a true man of me. He paused; there was a long silence, in which she watched him with the same stunned, unforgiving stare, but his eyes were fixed on the shells, that quivered and shook with a delicate pink light as he moved them. "There is not one of them," in the same subdued voice, passing his finger over them slowly, "not one of them that has not been to me the symbol of a thousand beautiful and tender hopes of that better life which I hoped some day to gain. They are all over now."

He let them fall into his palm, where they shone with a soft shimmer, and held them out to her. She looked at him steadily a moment, and then put them back. "Let them be a sign to you still. I will not take them back."

He did not understand her, but he thrust the silly toy away eagerly, as if something yet remained to him. There was a step on the grass and a voice humming some street song, and calling Broderip at intervals.

"Where are you hiding, eh?" demanded Ottley, clapping him on the shoulder. "Matters are stagnant indoors. You are going, Miss Conrad?"

"It is late; it is time my father was gone." She looked at Broderip. He lifted his hat and stood uncovered. He thought that she would have held out her hand; but she did not, and neither of them said a word of farewell. But her eyes met his for a moment, and she turned and went from them. Ottley stood rubbing his fat little hands, glancing from one to the other with a troubled face.

"Can I help you, Broderip?" he said, gently, a while after.

"Yes," in a grave, composed tone, which surprised him. "I have been playing a miserable part, and it is time to lay it aside. There is a man asleep in yonder room who is my brother. That will tell you the whole story, Ottley. Out of regard to the old friendship we have had, will you make it known for me? I would be glad if the meanest servant in my house would know my history to-night. Will you leave me alone, now, Ottley?"

Ottley took his hand and wrenched it, but Broderip neither felt him nor saw him go. His eyes were fixed on the woman's figure that paused in the lighted door. But without a look back-turned she went in and closed it after her.

"Good night, Margaret," he whispered, and leaning on the wall looked steadily through the night into the vacant road.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE COST OF VICTORY.

"WHAT you agoin' to do now, suh?" asked Nat, timidly, his eyes wandering over the delicate china and glittering service, for the brothers had breakfasted together. Doctor Broderip glanced out into the pleasant morning, and back again. What was he going to do? The question was not so easy to answer. For the battle had been fought; the victory won. Now, what remained?

Miss Conrad had stated the answer barely enough a few hours before. She came down to her father in her most royally sweeping purple robe, her black hair braided in a coronet about her head; but the lynx-eared old man fancied that neither sleep nor tears had softened her eyes since the night before. "Margaret," he said, abruptly, "I am going to Broderip."

She did not answer for a moment. "For what purpose?"

"I thought"—sopping his forehead with his bandanna handkerchief—"I thought—God knows, Meg, now's the time to stand by him. I reckon you have not forgotten what we owe to him."

"It is not gratitude he asks," with whitening lips, but pouring out his coffee with a steady hand.

"I reckon old Hugh Conrad's face is but little known here, but it is a white one, and I mean to go with him to-day to his hospitals and patients. The story is public already, and there may be askance looks or innuendoes from which I can shield him."

She rose slowly to her feet, the gray eyes dull in the white face, pressing her broad palms together; but he could not see her, and her voice was resolute and cold, as usual. "Who pauses to make innuendoes to a mulatto? You do not understand what this man is."

"Your comprehension was quick enough, Meg," bitterly. The taunt fell as if on steel; she went through her part unmoved.

"Father, it is as well this matter should be set clearly before us from the first. John Broderip is the son of a negro; there is not one of his hospitals or patients to-day would open their doors to him, if he assumed his old place; there is not a club, church, theatre or restaurant from which he would not be ejected like a felon; the academies of science or art, where he was a director, would admit him only if he came as the servant of a white child; if he put a foot into one of these street-cars he would be thrust out with insult. No white man or woman would receive him to their table. If he married there would be no citizenship for him, no honor for his wife, no education for his children. They are the one class which the law and the white man are privileged to trample under foot." She had laid her hands on the back of a chair; the words came slowly at the last, as if strength or reason lagged.

"You exaggerate, Margaret," said Conrad, rising. "John Broderip cursed to a fate like that! You talk like a woman!"

"Because I have not the eyes of a man. You have been blind to all that was before you. He will but share the fate of other mulattoes in this city -in all the North—as wealthy, cultured, sensitive as he."

"When did you cry out with pity for them before, Margaret?"

She drew herself to her full height. "I have no pity. The negro blood——" The white, powerful limbs began to shiver and tremble, as she put out one hand blindly, and caught by the wall. "The negro blood is is abhorrent to me. I have broken silence on this matter to-day, father, that you may never broach it again;" and then she slowly dragged herself from the room, while the old man as sternly made ready to go to his friend.

"Meg's pithy," he muttered. "But, time will tell—time will tell!"

John Broderip, alone with Nathan, did not need to hear Miss Conrad's mapping out of his life. He knew that. The knowledge and skill acquired in all these patient years lay dead weight in his hands to-day. Already some whispers of the absolute change waiting for him had penetrated indoors; covert insults from his servants, with a quiet assumption of superiority from the meanest of them. Miserable straws he might have called the signs of contempt of the whites which she threatened. Yet the wind that blew them was unconquerable and deadly. The strength and hope of many a struggling half breed in the north had withered in it. He got up unsteadily, going to the broad sunshine of a window, looking back at the rooms, each of which it had been his hobby to form into a picture of form and color. What should he do with these treasures of luxury or art in this intolerable solitude to which he was hereafter condemned? What should he do with the habits and tastes which he had painfully gained? He looked at the yellow skin of his wrist with a fierce loathing. It was an iron mask, that shut him in from all the hopes, the ambitions, the enjoyments of other men.

Nat had shambled closely after him, in his eager wish to be respectful, and sat awed and embarrassed on the edge of a chair. The brother he had found oppressed him with a sense of inferiority as no master had ever done. It was not Sap, from the stables. So Nat's heart went back, with a fresh sense of loneliness, to Anny and the boy. Broderip watched, speculatively, the bald, uncouth little man, with his cowed, homesick face, who had been drinking all of his life the bitter cup which he had raised to-day to his lips.

"How have they borne it?" he said. "They have neither philosophy, nor records of a great past, nor coherence to work for a place among nations, as other oppressed people have had."

"Dey's got trust in de Lord," shrewdly catching his meaning. "Dar's no whites like 'em for dat."

"In the Lord?" Broderip scowled up into the dark blue heaven as he turned. Last night he had served this God, if never before; he had fought the good fight—striven to be a true man; the result of it was that he proved his soul to be barred down into an accursed body; every means by which manhood had growth closed to him. All through his educated life he had clung with a childish belief to some justice beyond man's law, which should give to him and his people recompense at last. Now he had tested it. On this morning, when this world which he had made for himself crumbled around him, no loss was so great as that of this shadow to the poor gambler and scoffer.

He stood, his hands behind him, his quiet, questioning look of challenge still turned to the sky, when Nat spoke to him. "D'ye think, suh, de Gov'ment 'll give us a chance to go in de army?"

"Of what use would it be?" savagely. "Four millions of cowards, who have held their necks under the yoke so long without a struggle, are not likely to fight for freedom now, or use it when gained."

Nat drummed his fingers on his knees, and coughed anxiously. "I donno, suh," he ventured at last. "Dey neber know'd dey was so great a people; de slave in M's Jeems' plantation neber had no way ob touchin' de slave in Georgy. 'Pears to me when dey kin speak to each oder by newspapers an' books, like de white men, dey'll feel dere strength, an' use it. Like de dead Lazarus, suh," his voice rising: "him felt his knees, an' his arms, an' his head tinglin' like, an' know'd he was a whole man; an' den de blood begin to run all ober de body, an' he rose up an' come out ob de grave where he was buried."

Broderip smiled. "Who would have thought to find you a political economist, Nat?"

"I'se much obleeged, suh," with a perplexed look. And after a while, "I talked to de cullored people whereber de regiment or M's Markle trabelled. Dar's a few quiet men dat tinks dese things ober, an' de rest follers dem, like ign'rant sheep afer de ram. I tink," thoughtfully, "de reason dey don't help work for dere freedom is dey don't know who to trust. Dey hears dat de Yankees 'll sell dem down inter Cuba, an' as fur dere ole marsters—well, dey knows dem," with a laugh. "Dey'd fight like debbils under a man ob dere own cullor," after a pause.

Broderip turned sharply, facing him. Nathan bore the searching look steadily. There was a meaning in the faces of both men which never had been put into words. "Dey calls M's Linkum Moses. Moses warn't a white man, an' a stranger," deliberately. "He wur a chile ob de slave woman, an' he went an' stole all de

learnin' ob his masters, an' den come back an' took his people cross de riber inter freedom. *His own people*, suh."

The watchful face before him grew slowly peaked and gray, the delicate fingers clenched the table-edge like a vice, the thin body swayed to and fro, but there was speculation in the hazel eyes fixed on the mulatto. This the end of it? To leave his dainty refinement of life; to give up Margaret, in order to become a leader among the filthy black swarms of Bedford street, or of the fouler hordes of Southern field-hands? His head bent, his chin resting on his breast. Nathan could comprehend the nausea, and the cold, beaded sweat in the face, though he could go no further.

"I wish, 'fore God," he cried, "I'd stayed yander in Tennessee. I'se only fotched you down alongside ob me, an' what's de use ob dat? You wos comf'ble and rich, and plenty ob frens; and we cullored people kin git nothin'; 'pears as if God and man had turned agin us."

Which words were like a lever that raised the other half of Broderip's nature to the surface, as he thought of them. The color began to come to his skin, yellow and thick; the brooding, dangerous rebellion of the mulatto to his eyes. He paced up and down, and presently stopped before Nat again.

"Why need negroes whine for God or man to help them? White men help themselves. You see what I have made of myself; any of my people can do the same."

"You wos helped; you mean to help dem?" eagerly. "You goin' to fight for dem, suh?"

"I? I? I cannot tell, Nathan. Sit down; I want to hear all you know of—of my father," and the two men sat down side by side.

Just before dusk that evening, Ottley's brisk, fat little figure crossed the verandah, and entered one of the low windows. "The ramparts are scaled at last!" shaking both of Broderip's hands with a nervous laugh. "Conrad is behind me. We have been at the door twenty times to-day, with a dozen others. But I swore I'd have you out of your burrow. Chilly to-day, eh? Heard the additional news from Pocotaligo? Bad! bad! Here's Conrad," stepping aside with a flushed face to make way for the old man.

"You are kind, gentlemen," said Broderip, with a stately bow, his trembling hands behind him.

"Kindness is a word that hasn't much meanin' between you and me," said Conrad, simply, sitting down.

"My brother is here," but turning he found, with a secret relief, that Nat had disappeared.

"What is the matter, Mr. Conrad?" his physician's eye awake on the instant to the bilious skin, and disordered breathing.

"How can I tell? The liver, I suppose, as usual."

"A glass of dry wine, now —" his hand on the bell; he stopped, turning red and then pale.

"I wish you would, Broderip. I am run down, that's true."

"Where is Robert?" blundered Ottley, as a black face appeared at the door.

"Gone. The servants gave warning and I filled my house with my own people. The poor fools gathered round me with an absurdly clannish, affectionate pride," said Broderip, with a pleased, unsteady laugh.

"They'll have their Bruce, or their Tell—yet," said Ottley. "Gad! what a hero they'll make of him when he comes!"

"I have no heroic ambitions, yet I have thought of doing something for them. My road is blocked on every other side."

There was a sudden silence. Conrad put down his glass and turned his watchful, anxious face toward the younger man.

"If they—if we," his voice growing steadier, "were allowed to strike a blow for our own freedom, I would feel that there was yet a standing-ground, and work for me, in the world."

Ottley's tact failed him in this strait. Conrad turned away from Broderip with a look of half envy. "It is so seldom," he said, gravely, "that God puts such a chance in the path of a man!"

"What chance?"

"Not worldly greatness, though that's included; but to be the leader of a great people out of slavery; out of the ignorance in which they've been bound! No man's work is so high as that; it would be the old story of Greatheart opening the dungeons of Giant Despair!" with smothered fire in his voice.

"I have no doubt the way will be opened to you," said Ottley, who was by this time master of the dilemma. "Strong pressure is being brought on the President, I happen to know, to secure the enlistment of colored soldiers; and some of the best men in New York and Boston are crowding forward to serve as their leaders."

"It is not their place," said Broderip, sharply.

"But there are so few colored men in your position," said Conrad, gently.

"That is true! that is true!" with a pleased flutter. "I have drudged hard and long, Mr. Conrad; it is only just that some controlling work should come for me, and that it should be for my people."

The gulf between the white man and the black was bridged over; how, it did not occur to Broderip to question until they had left him late in the night. Then he wondered if a few friendly words could have so changed the face of the world to him. He walked about restlessly, thinking of the four millions of wronged, degraded souls, waiting for help. The work which he had turned

from with loathing in the morning seemed to him fit only for the hands of the pure, holy Christ. Who was he to undertake it?

It began to rain; a slow, steady drizzle, blotting out the stars, and giving one that homelike, indoors feeling. But Broderip threw open the door into the outer air, as if stifling for breath. The night and rain seemed to keep him from his work; his head ached, his blood burned hot and strong. To think of the years in which his people had cried for help in vain, of the souls he might have led into daylight, the chains he might have loosed with his squandered money! His old father, that he had suffered to drag out his last years on the rations of a toothless dog! If the morning and his work would but come! He thought, as he came in, and prepared for bed, his countenance growing simple and eager, that it was almost certain that Miss Conrad thought his coming work as noble a one as did her father. And, after a while, lying still in the darkness, with the rain beating against the window, he wondered whether, when the work was done, and well done, and he came back, white men would still remember their old prejudice. Whether——? and a slow, tender smile gathered on his face before he slept, quietly as a tired boy.

Going home that evening, Ottley took Mr. Conrad to task. "Were you mad? Broderip's lungs would not bear a single campaign."

"I know it. But the plan was already present to him as drudgery. I only spoke truth, when I lifted it into heroism. Good God, sir, the man was like a healthy animal forced into an exhausted receiver, and dying for want of air. When he stood up this morning, calling himself a mulatto, what place had this world kept for him?"

"Well, well, Hugh, have done with it! I can't force Broderip, in my own mind, into a negro. If I could—— Let's drop the subject. Nothing has so upset me for years. I confess I have the prejudice of my class. Who was that young officer with you this morning?"

"His name is Markle."

"A friend of Margaret's, eh? I fancied it," anxiously, for Ottley took an interest in the love affairs of the young girls about him, and was eager to see them well married.

Mr. Conrad's face grew anxious also. "No," he said, sharply, "no." For he could not so soon forget that all the world had turned its back, without cause, upon the little man in gray, yonder, and that it had fallen to Margaret's lot to deal to him the hardest and decisive blow.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE TRUE PRINCE.

DURING the few weeks which followed, Ottley was unceasing in his attentions to the wounded young Lieutenant. He was apt to hold on to an idea obstinately; and once having made up his mind that Miss Conrad's and Markle's lives would run smoothly in one groove, he eagerly set about clearing the way to do it. There was a change in the girl that he did not like: she sat silently at her work, looking day by day more sallow and old: there was a fierce glitter in her eye new to it: her good humored bluntness had become bitter and aggressive.

He hinted to the young fellow (with whom by dint of his persistent friendliness he had become intimate) that these symptoms were all favorable to his suit.

"Women are the most deceptive of all Nature's handiworks," he said. "When the husk is roughest the kernel, maybe, only is hiding its sweetness for *you*."

Markle smiled, doubtful yet pleased. His love, he thought, should some day warm and mellow her life as the sunshine the fruit, in spite of herself.

They were passing Broderip's grounds at the time: Ottley came daily to drive the young officer out.

"I would give much to meet that man, Broderip," said Markle suddenly. "There are some words which it would be better for us both were spoken before he goes."

Ottley flecked his horse with the whip once or twice with an annoyed look before speaking. "He meets few strangers now. I contrived that it should be so. I want to shield him, as far as I can. The fact is -frankly, I never realized until in his case, how deep is the instinctive revulsion to men of color when they threaten equality."

"It is damnably unjust!" hotly.

"I know it," with a shrug. "But what can you do? I have it. I never understood either, before, how it reacts on them—how even our affability to a man like Broderip becomes an insult. Most mulattoes, if you notice, have a guarded, morbid look as if expecting a blow the next moment. Yet I never knew the Doctor so cheerful or healthy in temper as now. Well," in answer to Markle's inquiring look, "I suppose, because his disguise is off. When a man takes up his ill fate and makes the best of it, it generally ends by bringing out all the strength that is in him, like a fellow training with a weight. Broderip has committed himself wholly to the cause of the negroes. He has been collecting and drilling them to take with him into the colored regiments which are being mustered into service in Carolina."

Markle drew a long breath. "He gives up all ties here?"

"Yes. The old Quakeress who educated him, and a boy whom he had adopted, he has provided for as if they had been in fact his mother and son. He leaves ample funds to carry on his many private charities. I am trustee. I think it cost a hard struggle to part with Phil, but it was better for the child, you know. I'll manage that it shall not be known at his school that he is supported by a mulatto. Boys are cruel little devils to jeer each other."

Markle gave an impatient movement. "Yes, yes! But caste, prejudice you see. Most whites argue no further on the right or wrong of the question than to say—'a nigger's a nigger.' I think Broderip acted rashly in cutting every tie that bound him to them, and throwing his lot in utterly with his people."

Markle was silent for a moment. "I must see this man," he said resolutely, "I don't think that what I have to say to him will seem an insult."

"As you will," Ottley replied dryly. "I will call on my return and tell him to expect you this afternoon." He did so, and, anxious to smooth the way for his young friend, gave Broderip a slightly exaggerated sketch of his bravery, ability, etc., adding that he was an old friend of Mr. Conrad's, "and something more, I fancy, of his daughter's. It is enough as you know, to say of him that the old Methodist approves him; for he is as cleanly in his instincts as one of his own greyhounds, and has as keen a scent for taint in other men."

"Yes."

Broderip was fastening a print in its frame which had been taken from the dismantled wall. He did not look up from it.

"He will be here to-day, then," said Ottley, rising and pulling on his glove. "Miss Conrad has spoken of you to him, doubtless. By the way," stopping short, "there's a curious likeness between yours and Markle's characters, though he is a commonplace, outspoken fellow. But the likeness is certainly there. It may have been that which made Margaret so friendly with you; eh? So friendly that I used to fancy that she would turn the heart of stone you had for women into a heart of flesh. But she only looked through you at him, probably."

"It is probable." Broderip turned, and hung the print up on the wall again, and stood, not looking at it, but keeping his back to Ottley. It was a coarse engraving of Christ bearing the cross, remarkable in that the painter, instead of the usual face, had drawn one homely and strong, with a man's passions, and a man's triumph over passion in it.

"I thought," said Ottley, "you intended leaving only cheerful, encouraging pictures on the wall? But perhaps you have changed your mind about giving the house for an orphan asylum?"

"No, I have not changed my mind."

"That is not the idea of Christ *I* would give to a child," doubtfully, "there is more of the man than the God in it."

Broderip smiled. "How to be a man -that's what we want to know—not how to be a God."

Ottley told Mr. Conrad afterward, that Broderip looked at the picture as if it were a real man who had spoken to, and counselled him. "I always thought, if Broderip was allured into any church, his fine, sensuous instincts would have led him to the worship of the Virgin and saints. But the coarse reality of pain in this man's face seemed to have had strange power over him in these four weeks of solitude. I cannot divine what Markle's business is with him, eh?"

Mr. Conrad made some grave, evasive reply; Margaret, sewing by her window, raised her head to listen, but her pale, full lips were relaxed, and her unlighted eyes vaguely wandered up and down the road as if the air that came to her had no living breath in it.

It was but an hour or two before dusk when Markle rang at the great hall door of Broderip's house. He never had known the man or his home; yet he looked about him with a sense of indignant pity. Vans stood at the outer gate which they were loading with furniture. The greenhouse roofs gaped open, showing the bare plank shelving where there had been beds of color and perfume. The garden flowers were trampled down, and strewn over with straw and broken crockery. The doors of the inner rooms swung ajar, to and fro, disclosing carpetless, dusty floors, staring windows, grates filled with smouldering ashes. Irish porters and negroes jostled each other, spitting tobacco juice over the floor, and swearing as they carried out books, pictures, statues: all the poor little surgeon's household friends, dead and buried henceforth out of his life forever. Admittance was not so easy, Markle found. The black servant, who opened the door, turned doubtfully to a red headed, sandy-faced young man who walked nervously up and down the hall, a self-appointed sentinel. "Mr. Farr, kin dis gemman? —"

"Your name, sir?" said George Farr, sharply, "Doctor Broderip receives no patients."

"My name is Markle."

"You were to be admitted then," with a bow, motioning him to a closed door. It was a long narrow room which he entered, through which the rays of the setting sun struck redly: here and there were piled chairs and book-cases, ready for removal. Near the door there stood a table of Florentine mosaic, and on it a salver heaped with trifles belonging to a lady's work-table; the gold scissors and stiletto had fallen on the floor, a heap of laces dragged down over a bust of Psyche pure enough to guard a woman's

chamber. Markle stopped short and looked down at them, his hollow cheeks growing scarlet.

These were some of the petty ways in which Broderip had made ready to welcome his bride: last night he had taken them from their hiding place to burn, and then, with his keen sense of honor, thrust them from him, thinking that he had no right to keep even his memory of her sacred, and watching while a greasy porter hoisted the basket that held them on his shoulder, and went whistling down stairs. He had suffered them to stand there all day uncared for.

Now, Markle could not know this, yet he guessed enough of it to send the blood curdling sharp and cold through his veins. Looking up, he saw the man he came to meet standing by a table, his baffling hazel eyes reading his face. He waited composedly till the Lieutenant came near, and named himself, then bowed gravely, and with a smile of apology turned again to the man to whom he had been talking.

But Markle, when his eyes were removed, drew a hurried breath. "He knows what Margaret Conrad is to me," he thought, and felt that he was to meet an enemy in the next hour such as he had never known before.

"But I was honest in coming here," thought the Western boy, straightening himself and watching his antagonist shrewdly.

The wiry little figure of the surgeon leaned indolently with one hand on the table, on which some account books lay open, a bill with the ink yet wet beside them, which the man to whom he was talking, had just thrown angrily down; a long jawed, long-nosed, plausible fellow, whom Markle afterward knew as a broker on Third Street.

"No law would sustain such a charge!" he reiterated, in a loud, hoarse voice. "It is extortion, sir—extortion!"

"Probably," said Broderip, suavely, with a quiet, amused smile. "I have no objection to that term. But the law will give you no help, my friend. There is no rule to limit my charges."

The man buttoned his coat with a volley of muttered oaths, among which mingled a jeer at his folly in "looking for the honor of a white man."

The surgeon turned sharply and met him with a cool laugh, louder than was usual with him, perhaps.

"A month ago, Proctor, I would have had your money to gratify my whims—to buy a print, maybe, or a cask of wine. Now that print and wines—all I have—are going to equip the regiment with which I march, I will not spare you. It is a colored regiment, as you may guess. I'll spoil the Egyptians!" with a fine sneer.

He turned, leaving the man to find his way out as he could, apparently deaf to his muttered abuse. When his eye fell again on

Markle he stiffened himself involuntarily, and drew back with the coldest sign of recognition.

"Your time is short, Doctor Broderip," said the young man, in a husky tone, coming forward and leaning his palms on the table; "and I, more than any man, may seem to you an intruder."

The little man opposite had mechanically lifted, and brought a chair for him, the largest and easiest he could find. He was an Arab in his sense of hospitality; but he could not force his lips open to utter a word. This was the man who, some day, perhaps, would be Margaret Conrad's husband; it was her love for this man that had made her forbearing and kindly toward him, fancying a likeness between them.

He did not hear the young man's stammering effort to be at ease; drew back into one corner of the fireplace, a thin, gray, insignificant figure; his hands behind him, his chin thrown up, his face in shadow, but for the stealthy, passionate eyes that followed Markle's, silently measuring himself against him in body and mind. Now, Broderip's perception of character was keen; he knew, at a glance, the difference in power in himself and his rival. Yet a defeated, shrunken look came slowly into his countenance and over his whole figure, as he looked.

He was but a mulatto before Markle; he cowed before the white skin and Saxon features of the man. Poor weapons, perhaps, but with them alone his whole life had worsted, soul and body hewed to the ground.

His tone when he spoke was grave and authoritative. "My time is short, Lieutenant Markle. May I ask your errand at once?"

Markle remained standing; it seemed to him that the unconventional words he had come there to say would be easier spoken on his feet; but he was miserably ill at ease, and hesitated uncertainly.

"I am aware," said the surgeon, after waiting a moment, "that my brother owes his freedom to you. I am grateful to you."

"I did not come here to beg for thanks," with a slight decisive motion, as if he had determined on the mode of attack. "Nat gave me my life; we're on the square. There's no relation between us but that of friends."

Broderip lifted his hand suddenly to his head, and dropped it again. "Your relations are with me, then?"

"Yes."

They faced each other in silence for a moment. Markle's enthusiastic face grew red; he took a step forward. "I came here, Doctor Broderip, to speak of a matter which lies between you and me alone in life, but I would like to tell you first how hard all this seems to me," motioning to the ruined home about him. "I know what you gave up voluntarily rather than live a lie, and I'd like to say to you how I—how every honest man honors and recognizes the heroism of the deed."

Broderip bowed silently, the color leaving his tight-shut lips. "If you had been my own kinsman," the young man went on, hotly, "I could not have been prouder than when I knew poor Nat's brother had played his part so nobly. Whatever cause of difference hereafter may lie between us," his face changing, "I wish you to believe me sincere in this. I would be glad if you'd take my hand," holding it out suddenly. "I am going back, when I am strong enough, to strike another blow against slavery, and if you will permit me I will exchange into your regiment and fight side by side with you. I have enough of the lion instinct to know the true prince wherever I meet him," with a smile.

"Under the mulatto's skin?" But he held out his hand, with a nervous laugh.

"There is no private reason which need come between us in our outdoor life?" anxiously. "None that ought to prevent our being soldiers and comrades?"

Broderip did not reply, but the kindling light began to fade in his eye, and the guarded look returned.

"I am a blunt man," resumed Markle, leaning heavily on the table. "My course in speaking to you may seem indelicate and rough, but it is my habit to be open in all business relations, and I know no reason why the same frankness should not be observed on points which touch us more nearly."

The surgeon looked up startled, a fierce scorn on his mouth. Miss Conrad's name, even in casual mention, had rarely passed his own lips; was he to listen now to this man discuss his triumph or chances with her as he would a speculation in oil?

"I know no subject open for our argument, Lieutenant Markle," he said, rapidly. "I ask no man's confidence. For myself—despite of your cordial recognition—there is a great gulf between us. No matter what my wealth or culture, the very pity in your face defines it. I am Cainan. Eh, do you see?" with a subdued fierceness. "Cainan; a servant in the tents of my brethren. But you have no right to cross the gulf. The very slave in the cotton-field is permitted to hide his poor fancy of a home, and keep a decent covering over it," crossing his arm over his chest as he spoke.

"God forbid that I should drag open your heart or mine!" said Markle, gently. "I did not come here to chatter idly of this thing." He turned his black-visaged front to the window, the stern eyes and colorless jaws testifying to his sincerity. "Under God, nothing has taken such deep root in my nature as my love for Margaret Conrad. Nothing ever will again. What a man might do to win her, I would do. But," and he faced Broderip boldly, "I came to ask you a question. I meant to take no dastardly advantage of you. I came and spoke openly to you at the risk of being coarse and intrusive. I leave it to your honor. If you have

any hope of marriage which you have delayed in order to serve your people, I will put aside the thought of her forever. I ask you because I would rather learn it from you, than put her to the pain of wounding me."

"You forget what I am," said Broderip, slowly. "She never will be my wife."

The white man's face flushed crimson. "Then you give up your claim?" eagerly.

There was no answer. Broderip's figure stood between him and the window, the hard, ascetic face turned toward the darkening sky.

"Ottley told me," in a rapid, excited tone, "that you were a man who did not care for women. Yet it is no wonder I feared you I can see what power you would have. And I'm but a dull, awkward fellow!" with a nervous laugh. "All work, work, and prose. But I can make her a happy, comfortable home"

Still no answer. The silence of the man brought a chilly doubt into Markle's triumphant face. He stopped abruptly. After a moment, he came to the window, and touched the surgeon on the sleeve. "Doctor Broderip," the boy's voice had changed strangely to one old and grave, "I mistook you! You did not give up all chances in life the other day? You have a claim on Margaret Conrad."

"I have a claim."

"When you come back from the war—"

It was still a young face that turned to Markle, but the patience, the sense of irreparable loss in it, awed him in his heat, and made him dumb.

"I will never return from the war," said Broderip, quietly. "And I gave up all chances in this world. Except the great work of serving my people," his eye lighting for a moment.

The dusky light darkened about them as they stood silent side by side. The figure of the surgeon grew indistinct to Markle. But he saw him put out his hands into the twilight, irresolutely.

"I may never see Margaret Conrad's face again," he said. "But she will never marry you—she will never marry another man. I think there is somewhere a world where my color will not keep me from her."

A day or two afterward Markle told old Hugh Conrad of it. "I could not say a word to that," he said. "It was as if a woman had looked up, and cried for pity. Though a shadowy arm like that stretched out would be no bar in *my* way. Love and marriage are for this world, of course. I bade him good night, and came away. I hope he knew by my face that I understood him—I hope he did! I'm but a dull fellow with words. I will not see him again till we come to the battle-field: we can be comrades there with no thought behind."

Broderip, left alone, stood by the window till the stars came out, glittering like steel points in the dark blue. Then he turned to the man's face on the wall. A childless, wifeless, homeless man, of birth as poor, and skin as dark as his own, who had gone down into the dregs of the people, giving up a man's whole birthright to lead a great reform, to cleanse the souls of imbruted men and women. By that light the mulatto of these days read the story of Jesus of Nazareth. Imperceptibly, this carpenter's son, whose visage was more marred, and whose life was more heroic than any other man's, was actually growing a more live and kindred fact to him than any of the white race that cast him off, or his brother negroes yet under the yoke. He often stood when darkness came, as he did now, before the coarse print, his forefinger on it, his eyes contracted on the face, asking it questions through the shadows of eighteen centuries; his eyes contracted, and wet sometimes, as no human being had ever seen them, asking, as of one who had borne it, "Was it an easy thing to be trodden under foot of every man without a cause? what was this for a man *a man* to do in the world, to live wifeless and childless? where was the recompense?"

John Broderip turned at last from the print into the lonely discomfort and vacancy of his home. He would follow this man in his work; he, too, would help to lift a degraded people out of their slough. He stretched out his hands, opening and shutting them with a slow smile, and then waited to speak cheerfully to Nathan and some negroes who came through the hall. But under all, there was a dull wonder if his work or his people were indeed worth to him the wife and children he had lost?

CHAPTER XXXIX.

"ONE WITH HIS KIND."

Joe Burley came up to Captain Knox's tent one evening before drum-call with a letter in his hand. "Here's mention of Nathan at last, Cap'n. This here letter," tapping it with his finger, "was written last November, and here's June, and it's just come to hand. Dang the mails! Nat went with his brother to jine a colored regment. Where is it?" poring over the page. "Rossline usually writes fair enough."

"Doctor Broderip, with his party of negro recruits, started for the seat of war yesterday. Although they were called into the service by the Goverment they were not allowed to wear its uniform in the streets. The white regiments, as you know, went out with arms, and banners, and music; but these poor fellows huddled along the pavement as if going to their daily work, and their shuffling and gait, and subdued look never told the story of their wrong half so

powerfully to me as now, when they were raising their own hands to right it. Doctor Broderip was with them; the same gray, still, austere figure as when in his own drawing-room. I fancied that his face was sallower, and the mulatto features seemed more plainly marked. I couldn't forget, as he stood on the prow of the boat after they had embarked, looking up into the darkening city, that he left all his life as a white man behind; that, after his long struggle out of slavery, he was going back now to his race to take their fate on him again. There was not a word of kindly cheer for him; the very evening was gray and dull, the wharf was nearly vacant; but I scarcely regretted shouts or popular clamor for him. I fancied they would hardly have touched his pain or his triumph. I was in an open carriage with Mr. Ottley: that dull, silent Margaret Conrad was with us, and her father. Mr. Ottley had turned the horses suddenly to the wharf, saying, 'We shall be just in season to see Broderip for the last time; you all wish it?' and drove on without waiting for an answer. Miss Conrad shivered as if she dreaded the night wind from the river; but I did not heed her. She is not like a woman to me, but a dangerous, lawless man in an iron mask. I could not turn my eyes, though, from the pale, high-bred face in the twilight beside me, and the shut lip. I could not tell what terrible cry they would utter if they opened. Mr. Ottley called cheerfully to Doctor Broderip, but he did not hear him; he was thronged about with blacks. 'See them crowd him,' said Mr. Ottley with disgust; 'to think what he might have been, and how he chose to herd with these wretches.' The surgeon saw us at that moment, and, coming forward, leaned over the deck, his hands clasped behind him, and looked down; he made no gesture of greeting; his eyes were fixed on Miss Conrad's face. She turned slowly round as if she were magnetized, and lifted her gray eyes to his. She made no sign or motion, though he watched her as the boat floated out and down into the darkness. Then I saw him stand erect and put one hand out slowly and gravely, the palm toward the land. Puny little man though he was, with his negro kinsfolk behind him, it was a grand gesture of farewell. When the boat was gone we drove away in silence. I cried, as any woman would; but Miss Conrad sat immovable as iron. 'If I were a man,' I said, when I could speak, 'I would ask no better fate than to fight at his side.' Then she turned on me. 'He is a negro,' she said. 'Nothing can make him as other men.' 'I took heed to the tones of his voice,' her father said, without heeding her; 'there's a tender human softness in them that's new. I think the animal is most sloughed off of John Broderip. I think this sacrifice for his people 'll bring out the man in him more'n any selfish love for a wife or home would have done. He was half beast before, in his own notion; but, curiously enough, it's through his negro blood that he

manity's got hold of him. He's one with his kind. His brother was with him.'"

"That's Nat, you know," looking up at Captain Knox. "But this letter's six months old. It's too late to give the clue of him to that boy of his and his mother."

"They were taken back to the Strebling place?"

"Yes. I saw her before they was took back. They'd a very comfortable place there in the hospital, but she was wearin' away. What with strainin' her eyes over the hill line for her man day by day, and then findin' Tom slippin' into the pollution of the other darkeys about camp, both together acted on her as it would on white women, a'most. Niggers has a species of feelin's, I reckon."

Joe took off his long-lost letter to the shady side of the camp, to con over at his leisure. Then he took out a package of letters of later date, worn thin with often reading. But he went over them again, growing red, and chuckling at intervals. There was some subject in them which he did not broach to Captain Knox, though that officer had noticed that Joe had suddenly wearied of the war, and grown despondent about his chances of ever seeing home.

He took now from a bit of white tissue paper a little lock of hair, softer and of a paler gold than Ross', and laid it on his great red palm, with a smothered haw-haw.

"To think of that little fellar bein' ther' in my place, and with my name, and me never seein' him! 'Takin' notice at a month old?' Of course he did; the Burleys were all for'ard. Joe Burley, eh? Joe Burley!" and he turned the bit of curl over and over before he folded it up and bestowed it safely in the letter again. "Even the words she writes seems to be stirring and alive," he thought, as he put it in his breast. "The very thoughts of Ross is bright and healthy. I'll go write to her about the child taking a shower bath in the mornin'. Between Friend Blanchard and that other old woman cackling about, they'll make a milksop of that boy before I kin reach home. That other matter, too, I'll mention."

The other matter was a rumor which Joe had heard from Anny—an old story which she said lingered among the Strebling negroes, that Nathan's father, Hugh, held some secret belonging to the Randolphs. "It may be of importance, Rossline," he wrote. "You'd best mention it to your husband."

Ross did not mention it to her husband. On the contrary, when Joe's letter reached her in the farm-house, she slipped it under the baby's quilt, hearing Garrick come in.

The end of the story of Coyle Randolph's will she never had heard; though before Garrick's visit to Kentucky it had been his one theme. After that, it dropped into the silence of the grave.

Ross made no effort to unearth it. The more she held open every thought and act of her life to her husband, the more she shut her

eyes to the fogs with which he incessantly smothered his. Aunt Laura had returned with him on a visit which threatened to be perpetual. She lamented to Ross without ceasing that Garrick Randolph was not the man he used to be; that he was irritable, moody, scoffing at himself, his family, all kinds of honesty or religion. But Ross was deaf. She was blind, too, to the change in himself, to the hollow, suspicious eyes, the cynical smile, the s mginess one day and squandering the next. She thought she knew a Garrick Randolph that even he did not now know: some day he would come back to her. As for this ill-temper and injustice, they were but the eruption of some disease which sickened him at heart; until she could cure that, why should she quarrel with its signs?

That day, Ross sat on a low stool, chafing her boy's white back and limbs with a vague notion of training his muscles.

Her dress (still the old fancy of blue in that) was a trifle coarser. Garrick had lost his office at Washington, and somehow the baby interfered with Ross' drawings, though butchers' and bakers' bills grew weekly heavier. Her cheeks were a little sunken now, but the brown eyes were brighter, and the laugh far more ready, and though her golden hair was tucked up in a matronly fashion, one curl hung down for baby to pull. Baby had been nameless for a long time. Aunt Laura had named it Coyle, with shrugs and lifted eyebrows of amazement at the morose silence with which Garrick listened to her. Rose herself called it Garrick once, but that venture was followed by a sharp refusal and another fit of inexplicable gloom. One day, after playing with it in an unusually happy humor, he tossed it back into her lap, saying:

"Call it Joe Burley, Ross, he is the honestest man I know." At which her eyes sparkled, and filled with tears, and she kissed him before she kissed the baby, in a way that put him in one of his old merry moods for the rest of the evening.

The day Joe's letter came, he stood smoking by the fire, watching her as she absently rubbed the child's legs and arms.

"What are you going to make of that boy, Rosslyn?"

She looked up, coloring. "Whatever he is fitted for, if I had my way whether teacher or blacksmith. But I hope there will be some great, generous work ready, like this of freeing the negro, when he is a man. I want him to be a helper in the world. Not a mere grubber for bread and butter."

"Your boy will differ from your husband then," with an unpleasant laugh.

"No, Garrick," steadily.

"God knows what was wrong in my making-up!" pacing the floor, his hands thrust in the pockets of his dressing-gown. "I used to be reckoned a kind, generous fellow, but according to your rules, I am no better than a thief and a homicide. You call the men

who sanctioned the discipline at Andersonville, wholesale murderers; now, I know some of them, and better husbands and fathers—"

Ross stood up with a white, indignant face. "You shall not class yourself with those men! Nothing you can have done—"

"Rosslyn, shall I tell you what I have done?"

"No, Garrick." She began fondling little Joe again, but her hands shook.

"It was not the old negro that I regret so much as the matter of the will."

"I will not hear," resolutely. "You are an honorable man."

"Don't say chivalric," with a bitter laugh. "That's past—past!"

"God forbid that I should," quietly. "That word chivalry has been brought to mean a fine generosity to your equals, and your foot on the neck of all beneath you; hospitality in the house, woman-whipping in the quarters, and starvation in the prisoners' pen."

Randolph made no reply, stood staring out of the window till his pipe went out in his mouth. Ross went on dressing her boy.

He turned on her, at last, sharply, "What if you knew your son to be a beggar, Rosslyn? Not alone in property, but in all that gives a man standing—family honor—"

A half mischievous humor twinkled in her eyes. "Dear Garrick, sometimes I wonder if family honor is not a heavier burden than family shame would be."

His face flamed scarlet. "You're right," he muttered, "you're right." Then he went out, and came back in half an hour, to tell her he purposed going on a long journey to-morrow.

"Yes, Garrick," quietly. (She had heard it so often before!)

"I'll give up my -Joe's inheritance"—holding one hand over his pale jaws. "When I return I'll turn into hard work."

Secretly Ross, thought it was the best thing he could do, but she only repeated her gentle "Yes, Garrick."

"I want to be off by the early train," beginning to stroke his whiskers in the old complacent fashion. "While I'm gone, Ross, if I were you, I would avoid Friend Blanchard. She is a very Machiavelli in petticoats. Ask Aunt Laura for advice, in my stead, if you need any."

Ross buttoned Joe's sleeve-bands with a vehement click, but said nothing.

He did not tell her that his proposed journey was into Georgia, and at the risk of his life. He hardly gave a thought to the physical danger; and if he had, would not have alarmed her. "It's the road that will make a man of me again!" he said to himself, with something like a terrible inward sob.

Ross began to rock her baby to sleep, holding him to her breast, with the old half smile whenever she caught her husband's eye.

She had heard all this so often before. She knew he would not go to-morrow. She knew his foot was on the entrance to the right road, but he would stand there, paltering, until it was too late. She offered no advice or warning. Garrick wondered why she grew so deadly pale as she sang Joe to sleep, but God heard the words in her heart as she sat singing her cheerful little song.

CHAPTER XL.

THE BEGINNING OF A NEW DAY.

He did not go to-morrow. Day slipped into day, month into month, until Winter had passed into Summer, and Summer into Winter again. By turns he worked feverishly for weeks, or was totally idle; it was noticeable, however, that when he worked he did not heed how coarse the labor was. There was no talk now of its fitness for the hands of a gentleman. He worked desperately, as a monk might have done violent penance by which he hoped to cleanse himself of some long-ago stain. But the weeks of lazy lounging and ill-temper followed as surely. Meanwhile flour, and meat, and clothes must be bought. Ross and little Joe tugged on together, baby though one was. Some manner of pilgrimage tests the quality of every man or woman in life; there were times now when to Ross the water was bitter, and the manna scanty; when she could almost have cried aloud in her extremity, "Why hast Thou brought me here to die before my time?" But as her eyes sank into deeper hollows, they learned to be more tender to her husband. She could see the Leader before them, but Garrick wandered apart in a solitary way. He had lost faith in the Randolphs, in himself; he had been more certain of them than of God. He kept his hold of his wife's hand: it was his one anchor. Perhaps her strong, healthy-colored physique, her elastic spirits, and sunny temper were of more apparent help to him, in this time of his life, than the religion that underlaid them.

But the end came at last, when the war was over, that time which cut short so many tangled threads.

One warm May evening, Rosslyn sat sewing on the farm house porch, her sturdy little Joe playing at her feet, and old Mr. Conrad in a great wooden chair beside her.

"Yes, it is heartsome," in answer to some remark of hers. "I know just the yellow light there is yonder in the west; and the dogwood's like swarms of white butterflies in the woods now, I reckon, eh? But, about Meg?" lowering his voice, anxiously. "I was going to say that I'm disappointed in Meg. It's a carnal disappointment, too. But Margaret always seemed to me to belong to that old Titan race we read of, with her large, white limbs, and

powerful brain, that's been dumb so long. I foresaw to look for some great utterance when it spoke. Yes, I did. If it had been in words or music she told what was in her, I'd not have been surprised if the whole world had stopped to listen. But when she ends in sittin' down to teach a lot of big and little niggers in Baker street, day after day—"

"But it is like your own work."

"O, I'm a different affair. But with Meg's beauty and power! Mean hands for mean work, I say."

"But it was her master's work," gently.

"Surely," absently. "Well, the black blood is not abhorrent to her now. If she had been less bitter once——"

Ross said nothing. The war was over; and that meant to her that four millions of men and women were thrown on the nation for protection and help; men and women whose brains and bodies were diseased and incomplete from generations of barbarism and slavery. Waiting for payment of their wrong; for the late chance which came in turn to every nation. It was in curious accord with her thoughts that, when she raised her eyes, she saw, standing at the foot of the steps a mulatto with his hat in hand, who might have served as the type of his class; a meagre, stooped, coffee-colored man, with a cowed, pinched face, and slow, melancholy eyes. His tone, when he spoke, had the reticent quiet of one who had learned his rights and meant to maintain them.

He came, he said, to see Mr. Randolph, bowing without a smile.

Ross rose with a vague alarm, at her husband's name. The shadow of his secret, half guessed by her, pursued her day and night. She did not know what hour it would arrest them.

"You have travelled far to see my husband?" when she had sent to summon him.

"It wur a long way, Missus."

She hesitated before the next question, glancing doubtfully at Mr. Conrad. Broderip's name, for some undefined reason, was now never mentioned among them. After the battle near Bermuda Hundred, where he led his blacks into the charge, he was reported missing. Whether he had been shot on the field, or taken prisoner was never known. She hesitated, as if about to unearth the dead, before she said, "You are the brother of Doctor Broderip, who went with him into the war?"

Nathan bowed, but did not speak. There was a moment's silence.

"Where have you left him?"

He looked up dully. "I'se loss him. He wur took to Andersonville. Dar wur no exchange for de officers of cullored regiments. Dar wus nothin' but death for them."

Conrad brought down his stick heavily on the ground. "No!" standing up, pale and trembling. "John Broderip never was suf

fered to die like a rat in a hole! God is just. It will be given to him to see the freedom of his people."

But Nathan's eye did not kindle; he shook his head hopelessly, and then it sank, as before, on his breast.

"And your wife and boy?" said Ross, softly.

"God knows, Missus, God knows. I've sarched fur dem, it's long years now. I heerd dey come Norf. But dey's loss to me, I reckon."

Ross' eyes flashed. She knew, through old Joe, that they were still alive, and on the Strebling place; but she kept her own counsel. A sudden wrench came to her heart as she heard Garrick's slow, lounging step. It was the last chance. The sight of this man might rouse him; but it was the last chance, and a slight one.

He came out on the porch, in his flowered dressing-robe, and stood still, looking at Nathan as he rose.

The mulatto's keen glance ran over him. "I've an arrand fur you, suh," in the same monotonous voice, a little raised. "I'se lost brother an' wife an' chile. Dar's but one I ken find, an' I kum to you for him, suh. Dat's my father, ole Hugh."

Brought face to face at last with his miserable secret, in commonplace words, Garrick stood motionless, looking in the man's face. There was no surprise in his own; he had waited the summons too long. But the thin, fastidious features, in their frame of waving brown hair, grew curiously rigid and discolored, as if a cold finger had touched the heart underneath.

"You sent him to Georgy, suh," simply stating the fact, with no reproach in the tone. "Dat wur de time when you had de right to send us to Georgy; but we cullored people is gittin' togedder in families agin, now—mudder and brudders and chillen. I'se got none left but de ole man, suh, if he's libin'. If you'll gib me a hint, suh, I'll find him."

Garrick looked over Nathan's head into the pleasant May evening. Without turning to them he saw Rosslyn's eyes upon his face: they seemed as if she asked life or death at the hands of God; he saw little, chubby Joe in the sand at his feet. A chill passed through him as if some deathly nightmare lost its hold; he drew a long breath, and then a strange clearness came into his face.

"Come in, Nathan," he said, quietly. "I will go with you to-morrow to find him."

"You'll find him alive!" said Conrad, in an under tone. "And Broderip will return. God is just!"

But Garrick did not hear him. He only saw his wife's face, flushed, grand and tender with the trust, looking for the first time out from her soul to his. She laid her hand on his arm as they went in together. No words passed between them, but she knew that he had returned forever to his true self and to her.

Garrick went with the mulatto in the morning. Friend Blanchard, who had driven out for breakfast, stood by Ross in the window, watching the tears and smiles on her face, that had grown both pale and thin in the last year. The old Quakeress shrewdly guessed the secret, but she was turning away without notice when Ross' thoughts broke out aloud.

"He promised to return before the boy's birthday, and to bring both the negroes. I have a plan for that day, if you will aid me."

"Does thy husband know it, Rosslyn?" putting her finger on the girl's lips. "Let him be first to hear thy little secrets. Husbands, in my day, were wont to be more jealous of women friends than of lovers."

Ross blushed, and, taking up Joe, began to talk suddenly of the croup, in which the old lady joined with a sad, amused smile on her withered face. One topic after another had been tacitly interdicted between them, until nothing was left but Joe and his ailments. Perhaps the silence between the two women brought them nearer than any speech had ever done.

When she was gone, Aunt Laura brought her crochet-work to the writing-table, where Ross was seated.

"I find Garrick has not taken his medicine-case, Rosslyn. I think the risk run by his going into those low, swampy grounds, at this season of the year, is very great—and so I should have told him, if my advice had been asked. But young people stand in need of no counsel now-a-days. I can conceive of no business sufficiently important to tempt the risk. What was his business, Rosslyn?"

"I do not know certainly. I thought it better not to interfere, Aunt Laura;" and Ross fitted a pen into its handle.

Aunt Laura laid down her sewing. "Rosslyn, you do not know your first rights as a wife! You could have a very good influence over Garrick, if you chose—very good. But you should insist on absolute confidence. However, I am tired advising you. What was it I heard you say of the boy's birthday? I shall not be here, however, so it matters little to me."

Ross got up and gave the feeble little face a cordial kiss. "Why should you not be here? Why should n't we all, for once, be glad together? It seems to me, since peace and freedom both came, as if a new morning had dawned for the world, and I cannot help thinking of my boy as being a part of it. I thought I would like to bring a little good to others on the day he was given to me."

"Then I must say, my dear, you are very foolish, if, as I suppose, you are going to mix yourself up in Freedmen's Aid Societies, and the like; meddling with the everlasting negroes. A mother who keeps her children well dressed, and manages their teething properly, has no time for such philanthropy, or other philandering."

"I'm not fit to be in a society," said Ross, simply, dipping her pen in the ink. "I always quarrel with the other women. But Joe has to learn that the best work for a man is to help somebody weaker than himself; and I think his mother ought to teach him that."

"That is another affair from negro worship," said Aunt Laura, complacently; and Ross wrote her letter to old Joe, undisturbed

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CHAPTER XLI.

CHIVALRY'S HARVEST.

A LOW sunset striking oblique lines of sultry yellow light over plats of rice fields; in the front, a white, verandahed house gutted and half burned; a clump of singed mulberry trees at its back. The quarters were, however, untouched by fire, and swarming with negroes of every shade from a sickly chalky hue to oily black. Garrick Randolph stood on the charred steps of the house porch looking down at them; a squat man with shrewd eyes, looking from bushy red eyebrows, the former overseer of the place, was beside him.

"There is little chance of success in your search here, Mr. Randolph," hitching up his trousers. "The old man is most probably in some of the dens in Savannah, if alive."

"I was told there were large numbers of freedmen collected along this shore, and thought it worth inspection. I never before saw such masses of blacks as I have found congregated in Georgia and Carolina," running his eye thoughtfully over the descent. "I begin to feel that they might become a power in the country, under certain conditions, of course."

"They're a weight that'll bring it to perdition if they're ever given a vote," growled the man.

"The more reason that they should be made fit to vote," said Randolph, quickly. "Where is the owner of this place?"

"Layton? Killed at Antietam. His widow is with her kin in Carolina. What could she do with this wasted land, and no niggers? Some of these people worked for Stacy back of the ridge, and demanded wages, but Stacy contrived that the wages jest paid the rent of their quarters, and there wasn't a penny over for food. Fifteen died on that plantation last Winter of sheer starvation. What of that? Stacy knowed when Congress made his niggers free, it meant it. Their dead bodies was nothing out of his pocket now. Then agin, the old uns and babies ain't counted in on most plantations, in the payment of rations. 'Wages you want, and wages you shall have!' says Stacy; 'but them as can't work needn't beg.' Stacy's sharp."

"But these old men have given their strength and years to him," said Garrick, raising his voice, as the face of Hugh grew suddenly real to him.

"Well," reflectively, "some of the planters are both just and kind in suiting themselves and their people to the new order of things. They pay fair wages. But with them as owned large gangs it's different. You can't in natur' expect much sympathy between a man and two or three hundred field hands he's been chousod out of, eh? Like them," nodding contemptuously to the swarming crowd below.

"I should like to go among them, Mr. Ringold."

"Certainly, certainly. I'll go down with you, sir," and Ringold preceded him and shoaldered a passage, using the butt-end of his heavy riding-whip about him as composedly as if it had fallen on brambles in his way, instead of women and children's heads. Randolph found himself speaking to them gently, as he had never done to his own slaves. The very tones of his voice had, somehow, a tang like those of Ross. A great, sluggish, sinking mass, he thought, shaken out of its old place in the nation. Where was the lever to raise it? What mortar would cement it in its place again?

"How do you mean to live?" he demanded of a withered old fellow with a mat of white wool about his dried, monkey face.

"Mass' Ringold tink he raise de cotton crop, hyur, an' we gwine in on de sheers. We's free men now, suh."

"But until then? You'll starve in the meantime."

"Jes so, Mars'," which the gathering circle echoed solemnly.

"Whose cows are those?" suddenly pointing to a herd of fifteen or twenty grazing below.

"Dey's strays. We den milks dem."

"Why not sell the milk in Savannah? Send it down in a bateau? Sell the butter; it is worth its weight in gold there now," eagerly. "Why not go to work and plant corn, yams -anything, on this ground on which you have squatted? You could make double the proceed of the cotton crop."

"Jes so, Mars'." the old man assented, nodding more solemnly. "De good Lo'd knows dat's so."

"I tell you," said Randolph, growing angry, "that famine is before you. It's written plainly on the face of this country. Will you do what I say?"

"Suh," submissively, "de good Lo'd knows dem words ob yours is de truf. Mars' Ringold, hyur, he's gwine to raise de cotton crop, an' we den is gwine in on de sheers. We's free men, you see, suh."

"And so they'll come back to the same words if you reasoned with them for hours: like a dog about a turnspit," said Ringold as they turned away. "A nigger's got neither reason nor thrift, and you can't make silk out of sow's skin."

"The negro in the North, wherever he has had the education of the white, has been equally thrifty. But he is everywhere imitative, and what thrift do you expect from the slaves when Southern masters were—what they were?"

Randolph stopped suddenly. He had not realized before how, since he came back into the South, he had been echoing the opinions he had forced from Ross from time to time—opinions for which he had lectured her sharply the very day before he left. His face grew hot for a moment, and then he forgot her, and, five minutes afterward, used her very words, unconscious that he did so. Another change was marked in him, of which he was also ignorant. Travelling with Nathan, he did not use the arrogant tone habitual to him before he married. It was impossible to feel in the same way to a chattel whom you could trade for a mare and filly, and the man who would probably poll his vote with you at the next election. Nat was keenly conscious of the difference. Upon one or two occasions Garrick even gave him, in a lordly way, hints of the necessity of a future conservative policy in the country, to which the mulatto listened submissively, neither understanding nor believing a word.

Randolph's face lowered into its habitual gloom as they retraced their steps. His senses had perhaps grown morbid, but he began to find on every black face he met, a curious likeness to the poor old wretch whom he sought. Was it the wrong that had been done to him which was stamped on them all, and reproached him from their eyes?

Nathan came up to them as they reached the porch steps.

"No trace of the old man's trail, my poor fellow?" said Ringold, kindly.

"No, suh," shaking his head. "'Pears as if we cullored people's little account in de world. Dar's sech a light trail lef' when we'se gone."

"There's a range of plantations," said Ringold, turning to Randolph, "on the other side of the river where the people are fairly paid, I hear. There's a night school somewhere there, where it's not unlikely you'd get word of him. We will have some supper, and ride over."

Randolph assented, and after nightfall they rode down to the ford and crossed, Nathan trotting on behind. The night was dark. When they came within sight of the shed where the school was held, the red light from its frameless windows and doors streamed across the fields. "I think that ar's a curious sight," said Ringold, nodding up to the shed. "It's one I didn't expect to see among Georgy field-hands, that's a fact. Let's get off the horses and walk up."

Outside of the shed, groups of half-grown negro boys were loung-

ing, asleep or awake; but the interior was crammed with field-hands, men and women, many of them gray-headed and decrepid. Each of them held a bit of tallow candle, and by its light was peering forward at a blackboard, on which the alphabet and a few simple words were written; they spelled these after the teacher in a sort of droning song, their foreheads knit, and eyes set earnestly. The two men stood watching at the window until the teacher perceived them, and at a pause in the lesson, joined them. He was a thin, anxious-looking young man, and held by the hand a little girl dressed in a queer slip of jeans, fastened with horn buttons, such as a man would be apt to fashion.

"I think I can gain some information of the man you want," he said, "after the lesson is over, however. The candles burning are a loss to my pupils," with a faint smile.

"Have you much difficulty in inducing them to come?"

"I have to turn them away, literally, by the hundred. They come here after their day's work, and save part of their scanty wages to pay me. I have schools every night on different plantations."

"I thought it was a work of charity on your part," sneered Randolph.

The man's hollow cheek flushed. "I wish it were. But I cannot give my time for nothing. I must live."

"I wouldn't have said that to Forbes," said Ringold, taking a chew of tobacco as the master turned away. "His wife died a month or two ago, and left him with some disease that had had him down for years, and that little gal. He's just begun to crawl about now—does odd jobs in daytime, and teaches the niggers at night. He was always set agin slavery, Forbes was."

Garrick looked at the child, and the man who was trying to be father and mother to her, and almost forgave him his unmanly work of teaching negroes. "How do you succeed?" he said, kindly, when the lesson was over, and the master, still holding the child by the hand, came to them.

"There's not much to be done with the present generation. They're dull, dull! Though it's pitiful to see their desperate efforts to comprehend and remember. I have old men and women of eighty trying to learn. Now, the little ones, on the contrary, are curiously quick and peart; but they're all alike—hungry for knowledge. It's like an epidemic among them. They've got the idea it's the thing that will bring them to a level with the whites."

Randolph winced. He patted the child's head by way of diversion. Forbes took her up, his eyes kindling. "Yes, she's a good little girl—Janey. Say your verse for the gentleman, Janey;" and when Garrick praised her, and noticed the delicate contour of her freckled little hand, he colored with pleasure like a woman.

"I have sent for a negro who knows all new comers in the neighborhood. He can tell us if your man—Here he is," as a stalwart mulatto swaggered in.

"'Pears as if dat was de 'scription of ole Dad from Kentucky," after he had listened to Randolph. "He's bin hyur since Spring. Ise'll carry him to ye. He's no notion of dyin'," in answer to some stammered question of Nathan's. "He's tough."

Nathan, who had waited patiently during the last hour, moved nervously from place to place after the man was gone, his limbs jerking, his lips trembling uncontrollably. He drew Randolph aside. "Suh, dat is my father he is gone to fetch: dat is all de kin left me. Kin I go out to meet him?"

"Surely. I will go with you."

They crossed the field, and seeing two figures approaching, stopped in the road beyond. The moon was up, and shone full in their faces. It was old Hugh, tougher and weather-beaten, the clothes in rags, but the gray wool and broad, white collar framed the same shrewd, watchful face. He stopped short when he saw Randolph, with a glance of terror and suspicion.

"Thank God, he is not dead," thought Garrick. "I came to look for you, Hugh," loudly, "to bring you home again."

The negro was silent for a moment; then every trace of suspicion vanished from his shining face. He held out his shaking hands. "Den it wan't by your will I was took away? I tought you couldn't do it. I tought you couldn't!"

Garrick did not speak, but drew aside, leaving Nathan standing in front of his father. "Who am dat?" cried the old man shrilly, after a quick, keen scrutiny. "He has de look ob my ole woman—dead forty years ago."

Nathan took his hand without speaking.

"It is one of the sons you lost—Nathan, Hugh," said Randolph.

The old negro scanned the meek, little, bald-headed man, then slowly drew away his hand. "It was a little lad I lost—a little lad. Hyur's an ole man dat you fetch me."

No one spoke.

"He wur a little live chap, about your age, suh," looking at the sinewy young Kentuckian from head to foot, his eye pausing on the finely-accented features. "He'd right to be like you. What 've you done to make him into dis ole man dat you fetch me?"

"But I am Nathan!" smiling feebly.

"God bless you, den, my son," slowly, turning dryly away, however, and hobbling up the hill alone. Presently he put out his hand and rested it on Nathan's shoulder, smiling. "I'se a cross-grained old chap; but I'se berry glad to find you, Nathan. Whar am yer brother?"

"We'll find him soon," evasively.

"He'll be an ole man, too," he mumbled. "Ise'll neber find my little lads. Dey's gone, dey's gone."

That night Hugh came shuffling into the tavern parlor, where Randolph sat smoking. "You heerd from Mars Bob Strebling 'bout dat paper, suh?" tugging at his wool, and then standing quietly before him.

"What paper?" pushing down the ashes of his pipe.

"De will; Mars Coyle's will. I gib it to a cunnel in Mars Bob's division, to deliber it to him, and I heerd he done it."

"The will? You had my father's will? You sent it to Robert Strebling?"

"I tought—" looking Randolph straight in the eyes, "if you meant as you said, to make all plain to Mars Strebling, de will wur needed dar. I tought, in any case, it wur needed."

"It was all made plain. When did you send it?"

"Las' Summer, suh, when I found for shore dat I would neber see de ole place no more. You'll forgib me, M's Garrick," with a childish smile; "but I tought you'd meant to sell me inter Georgy. It warn't fair to you."

"Well, good night, Hugh," slipping money into his hand.

He sat looking steadily into the empty grate, forgetting to relight his pipe. For a year, then, these God-forsaken Rebels and scoundrels Streblings, father and son—had held a legal tenure on his property, and from sheer generosity had forborne to touch it?

In that year he had been defrauding them of it.

He rose at last, and crept off to bed, a chill of meanness and shame pervading every atom of his large, handsome body. He wished he could slough off the old Garrick Randolph, and be born again a hard-worked, honest man. He hoped to God that it was from his mother's pure brain and soul Joe had drawn his life. "The Burley blood is clean," muttered Garrick Randolph as he laid down not to sleep.

An incident that occurred next morning hastened his departure North. Ringold came in while he was at breakfast. "Here's another cussed unpleasantness! Forbes, you know, the little gal's father? Well, they've done for Forbes."

"Done for him? What do you mean?"

"Your jaws 'ud hardly turn so white if you'd been here through the war, Mr. Randolph. Come out, and you'll see what I mean."

He went to the door and beckoned some men to stop who were passing, carrying someting on a stretcher; and then taking off the sheet from it, showed beneath the thin, anxious face of the poor teacher, a little paler than usual, with the eyes shut, and a dark round spot on one temple.

"Shot dead."

"Phil Tarr's mark," said one of the bearers, pointing to the

wound. "There was a paper pinned to his breast with Tarr's name signed to it."

Randolph stooped over the dead face; there was the same boyish smile on it with which the master had talked of his little girl the night before. The child herself stood patiently now by the board, holding one limp, cold hand in hers, her dress uncared for, and hair untended, as Ringold noted, touching her head, and adding, "He used to be astir early to have her washed and dressed, same as her mother done."

"You's Tarr," he muttered afterward, nodding to a man on horseback, riding leisurely past, glancing askance at the body.

"Why is he not arrested?" said Garrick.

The overseer shrugged his shoulders. "Forbes was a Union man, and nigger friend. It 'ud be nigh as hard to get justice agen his murderer as if he'd only been a nigger."

"Good God! Why, sir, my fear has been that we were pampering the negro with too much care," said Randolph, wiping his pale lips.

"May be so among the radicals. But your own State of Kentucky reports, officially, over five hundred negroes outraged and murdered in a year, and no steps taken to avenge them."

"If if no other provision is found for this child," said Garrick, hastily, "I'll take her home with me."

"What will your wife say to that, Colonel?"

"My wife's hearth and heart would take in all the orphans of the world," said Garrick, turning away.

CHAPTER XLII.

OLD WRONGS RIGHTED.

Joe Burley—Captain Burley now—had received his discharge. He stood on the stoop of a tavern just outside of Memphis, his knapsack and valise on the floor beside him.

"You're off for home, Burley, eh? Well, God speed you! Come to Cleveland when you can; you'll find a chair by the fire always ready for you, and a welcome. I'm going back into trade. It'll do us both good to fight our battles over again."

"Saddee, Captain Knox. Yes, I'm off for home. I've sent my sword by a safe conveyance. I was afeerd to trust it with my luggage. There's a little chap at home that'll prize that sword when he's old enough."

"Your grandson? You were as mum and quiet about that boy, Joe, as if you'd been a young man, and he were your bride."

"So? so?" growing red. "Well, you see, I'm old, Captain, and a great pleasure like that let into my life was suddent and onex

pected. He knows me a'ready, his mother says, through my picture. He's a remarkable for'ard child; only about two years old, now."

"You are going direct to Philadelphia?"

"No, I've got a commission from Rossline (that's the boy's mother) to fetch Nat's wife and child with me. She wants to bring the family together."

"Is there no tidings from Broderip?" asked Knox, who had taken a strong interest in the story, as Joe told it to him.

Burley shook his head. "Sometimes I think of the war as like a bottomless gulf I used to read of, where the youngest and bravest was throwed in as sacrifices. But there's none went down into the darkness of it that was worth more, to my notion, than that fiery little devil of a surgeon. I think he'll come back yet. He got cheated out of everything men care for, by his black blood. I think he'll have fame. God is just," bending his head.

Knox was silent for a few moments. "You go down to the Strebling place for the woman, Burley?"

"Yes." Joe's face clouded, and he stopped abruptly.

"I'll meet you here, then, as you return. Leave your luggage with me."

Joe did not leave his pistols with his luggage; he loaded them, and took also a big hickory cane, knobbed at the end. "Perhaps that young cock-o'-the-walk that shot me in the boat will want to try another 'bout. He'll find me ready, and more'n willin'," he said to Knox. Beside, he had a vague feeling that the work of his life was done, and the quiet evening was coming; so it was seemly that all old scores should be paid and done with. The score with Strebling was long and black. "I'll have the woman if he brings out the whole of his fighting posse!" he muttered again and again as he was rowed down the river through the June afternoon to the Strebling plantation.

When the boat floated up into the thick bed of lilies on shore, he stepped out, adjusted the priming of his pistols, and put them within easy reach. "Where will I find Strebling?" he asked the man who had brought him down.

"You're on the old gentleman's land now," resting on his oar.

Now, Burley was not at all satisfied with this mild mention of the man he came to meet. His ancient enemy being his only one, he had always made him a sort of receiver for all the gall and virulence of his nature; and, having finally wrought himself up to proper fighting heat of wrath against both father and son, would have thought it only natural to hear them popularly called slave-drivers or hell-hounds. He took out his old pocket-book to pay the man, therefore, dashed and grim.

"You'll find the old Cunnel, likely, yander," pointing to a low, shed-like cottage, after he had thrust the money in his pocket.

"Why, that belongs to the quarters?"

"The Yanks burned the house. The niggers is gone, too."

Joe started, then added, glummer than before, "Strebling could afford to lose 'em. He was an easy liver, a man of means—Strebling was."

"Well, I don't know. Most of his money was in Confederate bonds, worth nothing now; and they was free with their money always, while it lasted, both the old man and Bob. Nobody never come to them needy an' was turned away. 'Seems hard he's so put to for even his victuals in his last days."

"He's a young man yet James Strebling compared with—some others," glancing down at his own gaunt body with a sudden shiver. "What are you talking of his last days for?"

"He's broken fast in the last year; he's ten year older than you," and, nodding, he pushed the boat out into the river, beginning to whistle as he dipped the oars. Joe turned up the slope, trampling down the flowers under foot, with a dull sense of disappointment. His eleven men in buckram had dwindled to an old, gray-headed man, already defeated; unless the hectoring son turned up, he was likely to have no fight. "And James Strebling's driven to that?" glancing at the miserable dwelling. "Humph! The wicked stand in slippery places. Well, I'm glad of it! I'm glad of it!"

But his face was crestfallen and ashamed, as he came nearer and leaned on the fence about the hut, to determine what to do. Just then a light touch fell on his arm. "God bless me! Burley! Joseph Burley!"

"Strebling?" For a moment Joe stood in open-mouthed, appalled doubt before the tall, lean figure, about which coarse clothes hung in wrinkled folds, and the shaking old face with its white hair and beard. But the suave, downward gesture of the hands reassured him. "I'm—I'm sorry to find you ill, Strebling," he said.

"Ah um! Yes, I'm ill. Come in," pushing open the little gate and seizing Joe's big hand cordially in his thin, white fingers. "I did n't expect to see an old friend to day, or we'd have tried to have something for dinner—it's generally, now, flitch and potatoes; we're stripped pretty bare, here. But the welcome's the same. I think it kind in you to hunt me up, Burley, very kind. Come in—come in."

"No, I'll not go in at present," thinking that it was easy to see where Ross had gained her eager, irrational hospitality.

Strebling paused. "A year ago I would have entertained you in a different fashion. There's the ruins of the old homestead, yonder," pointing to a heap of charred logs and rafters. "This is the house of an old tenant of mine; she gives me a comfortable bed and a plate at the table for a trifle. I need but little; and I'll not need that long," in an undertone.

"But your son?" the half healed wound giving an angry throb. Strebling turned suddenly and faced him with wide eyes and trembling lips. "You did not know that Bob — Bob —," then he stopped and, turning, walked away to the end of the enclosure.

"His son was shot at Petersburg," whispered a woman who had come down from the house while they were talking. "He was brought home here and died two days after. The old man's never got over that, nor never will."

Burley did not speak. He moistened his lips one or twice as he stood looking at the feeble old man, leaning motionless over the fence, and finally went up to him, standing silent beside him for a few moments. "I never had a son," he said then gently, "but I think I can understand. I've seen your boy. He was a noble looking specimen of a man, Strebling."

"Yes he was," with a long hysteric breath, "nobody knew Robert but me. Nobody did him justice. Up to the last moment courageous and merry, to keep my heart up! For himself he didn't care to live when the cause was lost. His whole soul was with the stars and bars."

Burley was silent. "God help him," he thought, scanning his companion. "I thought it was partly the loss of the padding and hair dye had aged him, but he's touched with death. There's not a month's life in him."

"He led his brigade at Fredericksburg," said Strebling in the same hopeless quaver. "In three reports he was signally mentioned. But what mattered that? He's dead now; all their praise won't give him back to me. He was all I had," slowly, with a vacant stare into empty space. "There's not a living creature in the world now to care whether I live or die."

"Shall we go to the house?" gently.

Strebling put his hands on Joe's arm and leaned heavily on it, as they walked, drawing his breath with difficulty. "It is the first time I have talked of my boy," he said brokenly. "It would be a relief if you could stay with me a day or two, Burley. But this is a poor place—a poor place."

"It's not that I think of."

"What's that?" nervously. "The uncocking of a pistol!"

Joe's face burned. "It was my tobacco box I shut. Where are your friends, Colonel Strebling?"

The feeble eye wandered, "I think they're gone, they don't come nigh me. You and I were old friends, Joe. There was that trouble—but that's over and forgotten, and there's been a tie between us."

At this allusion to Ross, Joe stalked on more quickly in sullen silence. But he turned by the gate. "I'll not do things by halves.

I'll go into your house, James Strebling, and stay with you till to-morrow."

Strebling woke at the words, into a feeble alacrity. His cheek reddened, and breath quickened, as he ushered Joe into the house, and welcomed him to the dinner of flitch and spinach with a cordial courtesy that discomfited Burley. "Ther's somethin' in blood, after all. Ther's two sides even to this man," he thought. "But ther'd be no use trying to convince Rossline of that. She's terrible strong in her prejudices—Ross is!"

It so happened that Randolph's letter arrived that afternoon. Strebling read, and laid it open on the table. "I am sorry Randolph has heard of this matter, and suffers it to trouble him. An old will by which his property was ceded to me. The will was sent to Robert and me a year ago."

"You mean to act on it?" with an involuntary stiffness.

Strebling drew up his bent shoulders haughtily. "The Streblings have never been covetous, whatever were their vices. The will was a bit of spite work of a splenetic old man. It would hardly be in accordance with Southern notions of honor to rob a kinsman through it. My son threw it in the fire when it came. He was most anxious that cousin Garrick might never know or be annoyed by it."

He sat a long time tearing the letter into fragments, his eyes vacant, his lips moving with some half-articulate words, among which Burley distinguished, now and then, the name of his son.

"When would you be ready to go out yonder with me?" he whispered at last, nodding to the slope of the hill where he had told Burley Robert was buried.

The woman of the house beckoned Joe out before they started. "If you could suggest any change in that grave, sir, it would be a kindness. He's worked over it for months, and now when there's not a pebble to lay, or weed to pull, he's sinking faster day by day. His mind's going as quick as his body. You have a message, perhaps, from his friends? He's like to be a heavy charge in nursing on me, and I've four children, as you see."

Joe left her, uneasily, and went out to see the poor old man patter miserably above the broad, large mound that covered his son. Graves were not to Joe's usual taste. He drew him away. What was to become of the poor creature? "Or, after he's dead," Joe's meditations ran on, "what kin such a half-made, gingerly bein' do out ther' in that great and dreadful silence?" The twinge of awful pity that he had for the man, led him to be patiently silent when Strebling gave another timid hint of the tie between them, and asked eagerly about Joe's home life, not naming Ross, however.

"I'll live with my grandda'ter, now the war's over," Joe said, boldly, at last. "She has a boy now."

"A boy?" The old man stood erect, his eye flashing proudly for a moment; then he sank back into his hopeless quiet. "You are a happy man, Burley," was all he said.

Joe told his business that evening.

"You will find the woman and her son on the next plantation; take them with you to-morrow. God forbid I should keep father and child apart." Burley had risen to go up to bed; he turned in the door at these words, looking at Strebling where he sat with his elbows on the table, his gray head dropped on his hands, "Father and child apart!" He saw that his wrinkled lips repeated the words again, though making no sound.

Burley came back suddenly and caught his shoulder. "You have another child than the one who is dead—"

Strebling stood on his feet, put him back with one hand with a grave dignity. It is no time to call up old crimes, Joseph Burley. They have gone before me for judgment. I am but a lonely, dying old man. She *is* my child. There's never been a day of my life when I've not been hungry for her. Let me alone."

"It was only—"

"You have been a father to Rosslyn. She and her children will tend you in your old age. I'm to die without ever putting my hand upon her head. It is all just, perhaps, yet I didn't mean to be a bad man." The weak treble broke down into absolute silence. After a while he asked Burley gently to lead him up-stairs. "I am not well," he said:

Joe stepped into the open hall door, looking wistfully out into the night. His deliberation ended with a ponderous nod of the head. "God forbid that I should keep father and child apart," he muttered, and, going in, wrote a telegram to Ross to meet him at Harrisburg. "I will bring a sick man to claim shelter from you." I'll not tell her who it is. Rossline's been bitter agin her father, though she's said nothin'. It's downright onchristian in Rossline accordin' to my notion. Onchristian."

CHAPTER XLIII.

INTO THE SILENCE.

From Pittsburg to Harrisburg, Joe was obliged to travel by easy stages. Strebling sank rapidly day by day: nothing, perhaps, but the feverish excitement of the journey kept him alive. "If I had stayed at home I would have had six feet of cold earth on my breast to-day;" he said, "but here I am, alive, and on the way to see my child. I owe this to you, Burley," with a smile and courteous little bow. His effeminate minauderies were not offensive to Joe now: they seemed only patient and gentle on a dying bed. He

was in bed in a quiet room of a hotel in Harrisburg. Joe lumbering on tip-toe about the bare little apartment, trying to give it a home-like look. The doctor whom he had summoned had gone away, after beckoning him out to the stairway to whisper a few words, which had driven the usual twinkle of dry humor from Joe's eyes.

"His da'ater will be with him to-night, I expect."

"I hope she may not be delayed. In case anything occurs before morning, summon me at once."

Anny, her firm hand unsteady, was unusually slow in preparing him for the night, came back again and again to adjust the pillows or medicines. "You'd best take this drink in to him, Tom," she said, sitting down outside with a little sob. "You'll likely never do nothin' agin for ole Mars."

"Free now, Tom, eh?" said Strebling, quizzing the boy as usual.

"Yes, I'se free," with solemn, awe-struck eyes, giving him the glass, his warm, yellow hands touching the cold, ringed ones. That drink, and the kind word had all the solemnity of a sacrament to the boy. All his life afterward it would set apart to him slavery from the slaveholder.

"I didn't tell him nor his mother why we brought them North," said Joe, sitting down on the bed. "Rossline desired it might be a surprise. Anny's not seen her husband these seven years."

A pleased smile flitted over the feeble features, which were growing slowly, strangely sharp and wan. "A surprise, eh? That was a kindly fancy. A lady is never so graceful as when she plays the part of Providence to the wretched poor. And negroes have their feelings," looking up to Joe. "Something like the instinct of dumb brutes. Yet they have them indubitably. Yes."

Joe took a reflective chew. "The trouble is in reasonin' about niggers that the races is got so mixed down ther with you that you can't draw the line exact between nigger instinct and white feelin's. Now there's no danger of amalgamation with us. The antipathy's too strong between the colors. Unfortunately it didn't exist in the South."

But Strebling's eyes wandered as if the subject were of trivial import. "It will all come right, I suppose. There's a place where all things come right." Then he began pushing down the red and green coverlid. "Ask these people, Burley, for a white spread. This is unfit for a lady to see; and that cologne that Anny left on the table, it is a coarse perfume. I prefer the odor of the fresh linen to any other," adjusting the fine cambric about his wrist, and glancing critically at his pink-tipped nails.

As the evening darkened into night, however, Burley left the bedside oftener, and watched anxiously through the window train after train redden into sight, and disappear in the darkness. Near

midnight, however, Strebling touched his hand. "I think there is an arrival," he said, hoarsely. "I hear a woman's voice."

"I heerd nothing," said Joe, glancing doubtfully at the eager, glittering eyes. Going out, he met Ross coming into the ante-room. She caught him in her arms. She cried and laughed as she used to in the old, stormy-tempered, herb girl days. She put his ragged face back to look at it, drew his gray hair through her hand.

"So many years you've served your country," she sobbed. "But you're mine, now. I have so many! I have so many! You and Garrick and our boy. In the morning I'll show you the boy, grandfather."

"Yes, the boy," stammered Joe uneasily. "You don't ask who I have brought you, Rossline?"

"Who?"

"Since you've had a child, did it never make you think of them whose child you were?"

Ross turned on him: a woman's face now, stern and inquiring. Joe nodded assent to her mute query. She drew back from him. "All the loss of my life came from that man," she said, slowly, putting her hands mechanically behind her.

"What would you have been worth but for the pain and loss?" savagely. "You're bitter; you're onchristian, Rossline. Hear what I've got to say—"

She stood silent in the shadow of the window while Joe told his story; stood silent after he had done, after he had touched her hand and said once or twice, "You'll see him, sweetheart?"

The sweet, genial heart of her held a stouter and blacker skeleton than Joe dreamed of. Strebling coughed, moaned feebly. Her kindly instinct started up to conquer the old ghost.

"He needs some one! Will you go to him?"

Joe made no answer.

She hesitated, and then turned to the door, and, with a grim smile, Joe followed her into the room. The figure in the bed sat upright, the hands clasped together, the filmy eyes on her face.

"Rossline's sore tried. If he claims her as his child, she'd turn from him, though it wur his dyin breath."

But Strebling's courteous tact was alive, though half of his body was dead. "I am glad to see my friend Burley's granddaughter," he said. "Bring a chair for the young lady, Joseph."

Ross stood still, holding by the foot-board, her brown eyes on his face.

"My friend Burley," he said, his eyes wandering and going back to hers, "brought me home with him. He will care for me while I remain here. But the physicians assure me that I will not cumber the ground long. Will I intrude on you, Madam?"

"You will not intrude," slowly. Ross, like old Joe, did not do

things by halves. Having said so much, she went round the bed, and put her hands on his forehead. "You will not intrude, father," she said.

The night passed slowly. It was a healthy, warm Summer's night. Ross, beside the bed, with the nerveless hand in hers, felt a strange lightness in heart, as though some unclean substance had been taken from her, which had been made part of her since her childhood. The world was clean and strong, as if the breath of God had freshly passed through it. Somewhere in the wide night her husband hastened to her; her baby slept; this man who had been her only enemy held her hand close as his soul trembled out into Death; the blue starlit heaven, and the loving soul of Jesus beyond, bent nearer, nearer over all.

Strebling was only conscious enough, part of the time, to perceive the fresh wind, the shaded light, the clear tints of Ross' blue dress, and hair, and eyes. Pleasant airs, out of life, fanned him to sleep. Before dawn, however, he looked about him, intelligently. "Burley!" he called, "what did the doctor call my complaint last night? They all differ—all differ. There's a pressure here," putting his hand to his forehead; "I cannot account for that symptom."

Joe glanced at Rosslyn, and left the room. She wet his lips with wine. He watched her wistfully, put out his finger unseen, with a hungry affection, and touched her arm.

"I fear," he said, after a while, "it is near the end, my dear?" She could not answer him.

He told her presently that he never had seen a woman so tender. She was tender. If she could have put all the love that had been lacking between them into that last hour, she would have done it. When Anny came in he recognized her, and smiled, and when she was gone, took out the diamond studs he wore, and gave them to Ross. "They will provide comforts for the poor creatures." Then he paused, a quick agitation passing over his face.

"I have nothing to leave. My property may some day be of value; but the State will take it—all—unless I could make a will even now?"

"It is better not," said Ross, gravely. She would not see the sudden heat of pleasure fade from his face. He took out his watch from under the pillow—a plain one, with the case battered by a bullet.

"My dear," he said, gently, "will you destroy this when I am gone? It was Robert's. I could not bear it to pass into a stranger's hands. If there had been one of our blood who could have worn it——"

A fierce struggle between pride and some nobler feeling, as he spoke, had driven the blood from her pale lips. "No," she said, at

last, "I will give it to my little boy, and tell him it belonged to a brave man, father."

Strebling's eyes flashed. "God bless the child!" he said.

After a long while he said, looking her steadfastly in the eyes, "I think you have forgiven me. Will you kiss me, Rosslyn?"

She kissed him, the tears falling hot and quick. He half raised his hand with a troubled, deprecating smile, and, with the motion incomplete, grew suddenly still, and cold. The weak spirit and weak body had parted, forever.

CHAPTER XLIII.

HOME.

Ross brushed the last curl on her boy's forehead, as he sat by his grandfather, and then rose from her knees. "Now I am ready," she said, her cheeks red, her eyes brilliant. The house had put on its holiday dress. Aunt Laura, her lace lappets pinned back, was giving the last delighted touches to the breakfast, inside, with her satellites, Matsy and Anny, about her. Ross stood beside Joe on the porch, looking down at the clover fields, and the broad, shining creek below. If she could, by one motion of her arm, have given to all the world their heart's desire, as she had her's that morning! It seemed only fitting to her that the July day framed her little *fête* in floods of golden sunshine; not because it was her boy's birthday, but she had a dim intuition that to-day the key-note was struck in her husband's life, and that of these other human souls whom she had brought about her, and the tone rang out to her triumphant and clear.

She sent to summon Anny.

"The train is due in half an hour; it is time to prepare her," she said to Joe, with an unsteady laugh.

"You've kept your secret well, sweetheart. But there are four millions of these people impatient to be helped up—and up. What signifies four?"

"If we all lift a few –" nervously. "Don't damp my pleasure. Come, Anny," going down into the field.

The mulatto followed, Tom close behind. She had dressed herself and him because it was Mrs. Randolph's *fête*-day, and worked hard to carry out her plans; but her face and step were heavy and worn out as she watched the white lady's delicate figure and radiant face before her.

Rosslyn turned to her suddenly. "What brings the tears to your eyes on my holiday?"

The woman hesitated. "I was thinking, Missus, that God was good to you. Yer husband was coming back to you—"

"Yes, my husband is coming back to me," gently.

She walked on in silence until she came to a small brick house, set in a square patch of a flower and vegetable garden, and opening the gate, went in.

"It is a house which my husband will let to a man that he brings with him to-day. A good workman, I believe, with an industrious wife," as she unlocked the door. "The rent will be merely nominal for a year or two. I will find them work and good wages."

Anny courtesied, seeing that some reply was expected from her.

"Work and wages enough to enable them to buy the place in time, if they desire it. I would be glad if you and Tom would remain here until the man arrives, and re-arrange the furniture according to your own taste. I bought it for his wife. She is a friend of mine."

"I'll do my best," said Anny, zealously, taking the key. It was a long time since she and Tom had dreamed their little dream out of a home of their own, to which "he," when he was found, would come; but the remembrance of it gave zest to this chance of happiness for strangers. The boy and she entered the cottage, while Ross, with a subdued smile, went back to the house. She walked leisurely, thinking she had yet half an hour to spare. There was no use in going to her grandfather, or the boy; they were too much taken up with each other to have a word to spare for her. She had yet her childish love of stories, and had tried every day to inveigle Joe into a corner to tell her some of his adventures, but it was always young Joe's time for a bath in the creek, or a canter on the old mule, or an expedition for eggs, or to see the cows milked.

She gave up to-day in despair, and left them to their own devices.

Turning up the path through the orchard, her heart throbbed and stood still. She caught sight of a tall, sinewy figure crossing the fields with a quick, elastic step, leaping the fences, whistling like a boy, calling to Aunt Laura on the porch, in his old, merry fashion, pausing at the gate to lift Friend Blanchard from her coupé with a hearty, cordial welcome. Ross stopped in the little arbor, and beckoned him to come to her. Her knees trembled, her blood ran faintly, she knew not why, and when he came and took her in his arms, her eyes grew blind as she hid her face on his breast. It was in this arbor the vision of what he seemed to others, had shown itself to her long ago. But this was the husband she had loved. He had come to her at last.

He kissed the wet, closed eyes. "What! crying? Oh, foolish sweetheart! Because it is our boy's birthday, *and mine!*"

Then both were silent.

Soon after, the grape leaves were pushed aside, and a gray head and golden one were thrust in side by side. It was hard to tell, Ran-

dolph thought, which was the ruddiest face, or most in love with life. His heart warmed to the old man as never before, though he had been proud of old Joe's bravery and popularity this many a day. They went up the path to the house, Garrick's hand resting on the shoulder on which the boy was seated.

"I can't tell you how welcome home again you are, Burley," he repeated, heartily. "Ottley will be out to-day, Ross tells me, and Conrad. We are all especially anxious to hear the truth of that affair at Shiloh –"

"I'll tell you all I know, though that's little," shifting Joe to the other side. "Do you know," in an eager whisper, "this is the most remarkable little ruffian of ours? I was afeerd such a lot of women about 'ud make a milksop of him, but they coul'n't, sir. They couldn't! He's got the build of a great Newfoun'land dog, and the courage of one. The child's a study!"

"So?" said Randolph, with an amused glance at his wife. But he liked Burley none the less for it. When the old man lifted the child down he glanced shrewdly from father to son.

"I be'n't afeerd of Joe when his time of trial comes," he thought secretly. "He's got his mother's straightforward eyes and merciful mouth, and ther's the true honor for you!"

"We'll begin life afresh, Rosslyn," her husband said. "The property in Kentucky, although it remains ours, is left valueless by the war. But I've heart for work now. I'll open my laboratory to-morrow. "It is hardly fair," he added, laughing. "All dramas, from the old fairy stories to the last novel, end in a glitter of gold."

"Except the real ones which God orders," she said. "They oftenest end in love, plenty of hard work, and the poor at your gate."

"Here are Nathan and his father at ours," he said, turning toward the road. "I came across the fields to gain a moment with you alone. And this little girl—" he stopped short, remembering he had just told his wife that they were penniless, while the child, with her frightened little face and outlandish dress, shrank farther back into a corner of the fence. "I brought Janey home to live with us, Rosslyn."

Ross asked not a single question, even with her eyes. She put her arms around the poor baby and kissed her. "I've often wished for just such a little girl to have for my own. I've a little white bed ready for you to sleep on, Janey," and I kept the thin little hand in hers all day.

Then she shook hands with Nathan and his father. "You will come in with me for a little while," she said to Hugh. Her voice trembled a little as she turned to the tired, cowed, little man beside him. "There is a place made ready for you in the cottage yonder. You have had a long journey. I hope you will find rest

there." And they all stood and watched him as he went slowly across the fields toward his home.

It was a bright little room in which Anny found herself when the door closed behind her, a sort of keeping room into which the tidy kitchen opened. There was a blue and oak rag carpet on the floor, chintz-covered chairs, a shelf with books, and some simple vases with trailing, scarlet flowers, and one or two cheerful pictures on the white wall. Anny was a born housekeeper. She grew heated and eager over the little home, though she made it ready for strangers, went through the two bedrooms giving a careful glance to the strong, white sheets, the snowy boards of the floor, the shining little mirrors, then spread the table and placed on it the materials for dinner, which she found in the cupboard. It was long since she had shed a tear over her own poor plan of a home with Nathan and her boy, but this was very like that old fancy! and it had been so idle and childish in a freed slave! Nathan lay long ago dead in some pit of the battle fields.

She placed the last dish on the cosy little table, then tied on her bonnet to go. Tom came in walking stiffly erect as usual, to hide his small height. "Ther's a boy among the folks that's coming here to live," he said, "I see a sled and a box of tools and here's them books." He passed his forefinger with a wistful look across their backs.

"Kin you not read the back of one of them, sonny boy?"

He shook his head, with a long breath. "Wher you goin', Mammy? You look as if dar wur a ghost fur you in dis house. Hyur comes de man dat owns it!" peering eagerly out of the window. "I'll go meet him; I'll bring him in."

The stooped little man outside of the door put his hand on his head. "Dar's a fine fellow! I'se come to live wid you, my little man!"

"Wher's yer people?" demanded Tom. "We've bin makin' ready for you all."

"I'se got no people. Dar's only my ole father an' me." He stopped, passed his gaudy handkerchief over his forehead, and stood in the door looking vacantly down the road as if he had forgotten to go in.

"My mother's inside," stooping to pick a dandelion ball. The man turned, as if soul and body were tired alike, and, passing slowly through the little room, opened the door beyond.

Tom, outside, heard a moment a low, stifled cry, and then there was a great silence.

The sun set redly on Ross' holiday; threw cool, broad shadows of the great walnut trees across the grassy slope in front of Nathan's little cottage, where they all had gathered. The far quiet of night brooded in the dulling, melancholy horizon, in the dark-

ening woods, in the drowsy murmur of the distant water courses, a low harvest moon set its crescent in the gray west; but near at hand the crimson light flamed against the windows, the falling dew called out the fragrance of the clover-fields; the birds, whose nests were up in the walnut trees, chirped good night, and woke to chirp it again. Nathan stood beside old Joe, who had his boy asleep on his knee. The mulatto was silent, but his eyes followed Tom and his mother unceasingly, with a hunger yet unsatisfied.

"Anny is your wife at last, Nathan?" said Joe.

"Yes, suh. Mr. Conrad, he said dem words to-day. But dey could n't make us nearer than we was before. 'Pears to me, suh," after a pause, "Tom's uncommon large for his years. His mother she was feared I'd think him sickly. Now, I tink I neber saw a boy as fine growed."

Hugh, who was sitting in a great wooden chair, near the door, his gray head nodding over his usual wide, white collar, looked gravely at Tom, playing at his feet. "He's got de skill ob de family. I allays knowed he'd come back to me."

"He takes him for my brother," whispered Nathan. "He don't seem to understan' de new life beginnin', nor de home, nor me, nor Anny. De little lad he lost fills up de world for him."

"The Good Man is mighty tender with us old folks," said Joe. "He ginerally sends a little child to lead us softly down into the dark valley." He held the curly head closer to his breast, and was silent.

"I've had a strange feelin'," said Nathan, lowering his voice, "all of to-day, that before it was over my brother would come back to us."

"I always thought he'd come back," said Joe, sententiously. "It's not nateral that a man with his body tingling with life like his was should go down into the darkness, and make no sign."

"I tink he'll come to-night," said the mulatto, his eyes fixed on the far shadow. "He was keener to hear and see than oder men. I tink, alive or dead, he'll know how some of us here missed him dis day." He turned away quickly.

Rosslyn stood, with Anny, under a great willow; its trailing branches sifted the light in flickering gleams over her delicate dress and the tender beauty of her face; the homely, yellow features of the mulatto were in shadow. The two women had been talking together for a long time; there had been tears in their eyes more than once. "There can be no alms-giving from me to you," Rosslyn had said at the end. "We all owe to each other a debt, and I but try to pay it."

Then she turned to the vast sweep of landscape over which the solemn shadows were slowly falling, and stood silently looking at it. "My boy has a grand inheritance," she said at last, half to

herself. "To breathe this free air is of itself a birthright for him."

"Missus—?" the mulatto hesitated.

Ross turned to her, attentive.

"Kin you say the same of mine? I'm not ungrateful, God knows," hastily. "Freedom and clo's, and a home of our own, is much. But it's not all. Forgive me. A mudder kerries her chile's life on her heart when he's a man, jes as before he was born; you know dat. I wondered what was my boy's birthright in dis country."

"I understand," said Ross, gently.

"Dar's power in Tom's head, Missus, and dar's bad passions in his blood, and ef dar's no work given to de one, de oder has its work ready. He must be a man or a beast, an' dat soon. I tink of it night an' day. I'm his mudder. Dar's four millions of his people like him; waitin' for de whites to say which dey shall be—men or beasts. Waitin' for the verdict, madam."

"I might say the same of my child," uneasily.

Anny's jaws grew gray. "I'll speak de truf," with an effort. "De blood's different. Your chile has no slave blood in his veins; and de slave was drove, generation after generation, to lyin' and thievin' an' lust by de whip of de master. De white man had his books and his politics, and hunderds of ways open fur workin' or pleasure; de black man had only his victuals, an' dances and viler ways I ken't mention. It's told on our blood. De debt de whites owes us is to give us a chance to show what stuff's in us. Your chile has every chance open to him; but dar's few schools in de country beside dem kept by de Quakers dat will admit a cullored boy or girl. Dey calls us lazy an' idle, but wher's de mechanics' shop or factory open for Tom to learn a trade? What perfession is free to him? His hands is tied. His father giv' his blood free for de country," proudly. "He has a right to ask de chance for his son dat neber was gib to himself!"

"The negroes will be given a vote," confidently.

"I don' see what real use to dem dat is yet," gravely, "only to make dem feel dey is men. It's edication my people needs, and ways for work. It's de fever time wid 'em now in de Souf; dey's mad for de chance to learn. Ole men an' young stretch out dere hands for de books. It won't last if dey're balked now; dey'll sink back lower dan before; dey'll take to drinking and brutishness. Ef you sweep out de room and keep it empty, de seven debbils 'll enter in, an' de state ob dat man 'll be worse dan de first. De next five years is de trial day for us, an' a little help now 'ud do more than millions after a while."

"I think," Ross hesitated, "one reason of the coolness with which the whites listen to your cry for help is, the dislike to the thoughts of intermarriage."

"Dar's no danger of many marriages," said Anny, gravely and significantly; "an' as for mixin' de blood, it's been the fault ob de whites when dat eber was done. Dar'll be less of it when cullored women is larned to respect themselves. O, Missus! dat talk of marryin' is sech a fur-off shadder! But the ignorance an' disgrace ob my people is no shadder!"

Ottley, with Mr. Conrad, had strolled within hearing. He listened with a pitying Humph! "It's curious," he said, "how deep and wide the feeling is among the colored people that now is their day of salvation, and the desperate, pathetic efforts the upper classes among them are making for the chance to 'try what stuff is in them,' as she says. I heard you preach a missionary sermon last night, Conrad. I think the freedman stretching out his hands to know whether he shall be man or brute for future generations, is the most real cry for help now, to us, in the world."

"The niggers in Baker Street that Margaret teaches are real enough!" muttered the old man. His conscience wrenched him as he said it. If Meg had gone out bearing the church's alms and good tidings to any heathen river or palmy plain, he would have held her as a martyr. But going down to her eight-by-ten darkey school-room, or to Georgia rice-fields—Pah!

"I had a dispatch from young Markle, at Washington," said Ottley. "His regiment is discharged. I look for him here to-night."

A quick change flashed over the blind man's face. "Broderip will come with him! I had a presentiment that he would be here to-day."

Both men turned, involuntarily, glancing at a woman's figure sitting on the brink of the stream below.

"If Broderip came to her now?" said Ottley, doubtfully. "After all that he has done?"

"It would avail nothing. The negro blood is between them. And yet—"

"No, Markle will win her in time," Ottley broke in, hurriedly. "No woman can withstand a persistent, healthy, honest love, such as he gives her."

"I do not know," absently. "It grows late," passing his hand uneasily over his sightless eyes. "I feel the wind rising. I think Broderip will come to-night. The blind have another sense than yours, and I have felt my old friend drawing nearer to me all day."

"Your day is nearly over, sweetheart," said Randolph, as he came for her to bring them all into the house, whose warm, lighted doors stood hospitably open. "The dew is falling, and the sun is almost down."

"I will go for Margaret," said Ottley, and then stopped sud-

denly; the whistle of the train by which Markle was to arrive came through the cut in the hill. The two men stood waiting with anxious faces.

"Do you see him?" said Conrad, with a breathless, hurried movement. "Is he alone? Some sign or word must come to-night from John Broderip out of the darkness, Ottley!"

Ottley did not answer; he bent forward watching a shadow disentangle itself from the gathering twilight, and cross the fields in the valley below, pausing a moment, and then going direct to the place where Margaret sat.

It was the spare, straight figure of the young Lieutenant, and he was alone.

CHAPTER XLIV.

JOHN BRODERIP.

Above, an April day, as God sent it; bright with sunshine, and moist with dew: depth after depth, in the heaven, if any eye had cared to look up, unfolding their meaning of unending quiet and calm. Below, the April day, as man made it. A day, heavy with impure sights and sounds; the low, rolling masses of cannon smoke driven across the creeping river and flattish hills by the heavier fumes and smoke of burning houses; the air throbbing dully in the crowded streets and lanes, shaken at intervals by the roar of an exploded mine; stench driving stench; flame following flame, and by their light, masses of black faces lining the streets watching the entrance of a negro regiment. There was the ordinary mixture of the absurd with the terrible; the town, with its country build of houses and ill-paved streets, seemed insignificant enough to eyes accustomed to Northern cities; it seemed hardly credible that the passage of this handful of troops through this mile of street constituted the culmination of one of the great crises of the world's history; that as the black regiment entered Richmond, every footfall made sure the freedom of a race and the perpetuity of a government.

Markle, who had been detailed for the day on Gen. Weitzel's staff, sneered as his horse waded through the gutters, and choked in the stifling smoke. It was hard for the downright fellow to idealize the death struggle of an aristocratic government in these shrieking women, or the birth of a new people in the bodies of half-frightened, half-delighted negroes capering from square to square in the abandoned finery of their masters. Through the struggling mass and over their heads, the yellow, sulphurous smoke eddied and rolled, and through the tumult, the timed clangor of the wind instruments sounded like the panting of an animal led captive,

rather than music. "It is the death wail of slavery!" said a young Ohioan, who rode abreast with Markle, his eyes kindling. "It was a wonderful stroke of poetic justice that yon black regiment should be the first to enter Richmond, and enter, too, with such grave and solemn calm. I saw one, a young officer who led the front, who seemed to me the very incarnation of his people's triumph. A thin, small mulatto, who had just been released from a Southern prison, they told me; his face was meagre, and starved, and yellow, but it had all the tragedy of his race in it. Whatever these brutes may be," nodding to the thick-lipped, credulous faces about his stirrups, "that man carried all their loss and all their triumph in his soul to-day. A shot from the sidewalk struck him down, but he bade them lift him on his horse again, and he rode in at the head of his men."

Markle, telling this story in his own way to Miss Conrad, as she sat on the bank of the creek, in the evening twilight, paused here.

She neither moved nor spoke.

He drew himself erect as if bracing his strength and went on, faithfully as he had done before, omitting no particular.

"I was used to young Petrie's enthusiasm and exaggerated talk, but this story impressed me more than usual. I thought I recognized the man. It was nearly a year since I had lost sight of Doctor Broderip. Before that we had often gone into battle side by side. He fought desperately, cool and daring as a tiger. In all the war I knew no braver man."

"You need not dwell on what he is. I know all that you would say."

The heat faded in Markle's face. "As soon as I could leave my post I went in search of the wounded man. I found him without difficulty. As I thought, it was Broderip. The men of his company had carried him out of the reach of the smoke and confusion to a patch of delicate green grass just beginning to color the side of the hill back of the town, and had heaped their coats to make a support for his back. He held out his hand to me with his old eager smile. 'Our work is done, done to-day, comrade,' he said.

"Half a dozen big black fellows were about him, trying in a curiously gentle way, to make his body easier; they drew off shyly when the white men came near, but waited a few steps off, watching him anxiously.

"'They brought half of the company's rations for my dinner,' he said, with a quizzical, affectionate laugh, pointing to the piles of army bread and meat on a stone near him.

"Farr, the surgeon, who was looking at his wound, said: 'I wish they or I could do more for you, Doctor Broderip!' The two men had been friends in the North.

"'A little water and this cool air,' he said. 'I'll need no more. But my veins are on fire. 'This blood of mine,' looking up with a smile, 'will be troublesome to the last.'

"Farr turned pale. 'Yes. But you will be done with it in a few hours. Thank God! there is no such thing as race yonder.'

"Broderip was silent. 'In a few hours, did you say, George?' he asked, after a while. The surgeon nodded, and turned away. There was a long silence after that."

Markle stopped, his eyes bent on the ground. Miss Conrad had risen as he spoke, and stood leaning against the trunk of a tree, her pale, controlled face turned to the south. He glanced at it; even in that moment his lover's eye saw tender, womanly lines there, which he had never seen before. "She is terribly alone; she is famished with solitude," he thought, and his heart throbbed. She motioned him to go on; he began to speak again, careful, as before, lest by some word too little he might be dishonest to the honor of his rival.

"I'm not a man given to fancy; but it seemed to me," he said gently, "that the air grew softer after that as it touched the face lying on the heaped up coats, and the ripple of the river louder, and the sunlight more cheery, as if Nature had loved the man, and was glad he was coming home again. One of the negroes came up, regardless of the presence of the whites, and squatting down, took one of Broderip's delicate hands in his yellow palms. The strong features of his race came out by contrast, the sensual lips, the melancholy brow. 'This man was with me in the Strebling stables,' Broderip said to us. 'Half of my life belongs to him. It seems but a little while ago since you and I were currying old Thunder, eh, Zed?' The negro choked as he tried to answer. Farr stood up with a muttered exclamation.

"Broderip looked up quickly at him. 'No; they were not years wasted,' he said.

"'I know what your life would have been worth to science and the world,' the other surgeon said, almost roughly. 'If it were not for this accident of birth, you would not have been here to-day, dying nameless and unknown.'

"'No, I would not have been here to-day,' he said softly. 'But it was given to me to die for my people—to me!" and his pale hazel eyes grew brilliant as they never were in life, with a look before which we stood awed and silent. He looked up at Farr, presently, and said: 'I've been a happy man since I came among my own—a happy man, George; and I have lived to see the freedom of my race to-day.' Farr told me afterward, that that one thought of his race had seemed to absorb all others; the finding of that work in life had renewed the man; made him pure, strong and humble beyond belief of any who had known him in other

days. To the last, his eye lighted when a black face passed before him, and maintained a keen, sorrowful scrutiny of them. I saw the same look when a group of poor whites came near. 'It was a two-edged sword, slavery,' he said, 'and cut down the master and the slave. O, the work that is needed here! and the infinite pity, —infinite pity!' Once he said to Farr, 'there are latent elements of great strength in my people, if they are developed aright; they are a generous, imaginative, affectionate race, and faithful to God as they knew Him. I hoped to have done something for them. But there are others who will do the work. When the day was at the turn, he began to sink when the sun was near its height——"

She bowed with the same abstracted look in her eyes. They might have been those of a seer, he fancied. "I know the hour — I knew it when it came," speaking to herself.

"We knew then that his strength was gone."

So far, Markle had gone on earnestly, without break or hindrance, in his recital; but he stopped now, the blood leaving his bearded face, his voice becoming low and strenuous. "Miss Conrad, hitherto I have spoken but of my friend and yours that is dead. It is no time to speak of myself."

She turned, looking at him.

"Another time I will urge upon you claims with which the past has nothing to do. If I advert to them now, or if I brought them before Doctor Broderip in his last hour, it was because I felt that before Death there should be no concealments. I may have been wrong—I am a blunt man——"

The shadow of a smile passed over her colorless face.

"You will pardon me if this matter is dragged before you in an unseemly manner. My business to-night is but to tell you this story: my own chance for a new life can wait. But it seemed honorable to speak of it plainly to Doctor Broderip. My instincts, it may be, are not so keen as his were."

"As they are," she said quietly. "Some day my friend will come to me; and with all his whims, with all his moods, as he left me. There is no such word as dead, to me."

Markle looked at her with a puzzled face for a moment, and then went on, clearing his throat. "I went to him where he lay, and stooped down, while the others drew apart. I said some words to him. They were of you, Miss Conrad. I told him that when the war was over, I would seek to make you my wife. But if, out of the old love he bore you, he had a message to send you, I would carry it faithfully.

"'I know you would, Markle,' he said, and then his eyes wandered off, and rested on the distant sky line. The words I had spoken cost me great pain and difficulty, Miss Conrad. I thought if the feeling you had for him had begun to fade, his message would

revive it. But I thought it was the right thing to do. Any right thing seemed easy to do by the side of John Broderip, dying. I repeated the words, 'I will carry it faithfully.'

"'There is no need for any word to pass from me to Margaret," he said, smiling. Long afterward, however, when the thoughts in his brain came to his lips without his will, as they do in dying, he whispered your name with great tenderness, and beckoned me nearer, groping in the bosom of his shirt for this string of shells. 'Give them to her from me,' he said."

Markle held out the little toy to her, his face paler than hers when he gave it. She hid it in her large, nervous hand, her eyes still turned to the South. It was noticeable that she never looked to the speaker, but listened as if some message came to her from a presence invisible to him.

He spoke now with an effort. "He was greatly emaciated by his long confinement. His body looked puny enough when we laid him down on the pile of coats, being too weak to sit up longer. His eyes wandered over the pale blue sky, which was bright now with the Spring sunshine. We stood about him in silence, knowing the end was near, the poor negroes holding their breath, and watching first his face, and then ours, to know if there was any chance. Once, seeing his lips move, I bent close to listen; he was muttering incessantly of 'his people –his people.' After that, he looked up faintly, and asked the time.

"Farr told him, 'Eleven. Yours is a broken day, Doctor Broderip,' he added, bitterly.

"A quick smile flickered over his face; sudden of apprehension to the last. 'A broken day,' he said, faintly, 'But it is near noon, George, near noon!' and in a moment or two, stretching out his hand, he took Farr's in his own, turned his head gently on one side, and closed his eyes.

"That was all."

He left her for a time, thinking it dishonorable to even glance into her face.

He walked along the dark, slow-dropping river, and then turned up through the fields. The windows of the little tenant house were open, and within he saw Nathan's smiling face with his wife's close beside it, both listening to some talk of Tom's, while the gray-headed old man nodded solemnly in the corner. A little farther on, the red light streamed from Ross' happy home—such a home as he hoped to make for the woman he loved. He caught a glimpse of Conrad and Ottley, but he did not go in. He was in no mood to give pleasure to old friends, he thought; he had tried to be honest and unenvious to-night, yet there was a dull uncertainty, an ache at his heart, new to it, which was different from any wound in battle.

A sudden chiming sound just then filled the air; it was only the bells upon a great wagon which old Barley, and the golden-haired little boy on his shoulder, were ringing in the stable; yet he saw Ross start up from the fireside and come to the window, with a light in her face as if she had heard prophetic music from her childhood, or from the heavenly hills.

Markle turned, and went back to Margaret. "I am going to leave you," he said abruptly. "I came to say good-night. Some day I will come to you again."

"Good-night." She detained him with her hand; the grasp was warm and frank. A sweet and gracious womanhood which he had never felt in her before, breathed from her, the content of one whose work and reward in life were sure and sufficing.

"You must come to me again," she said. "I know you for all that you are, my friend."

He made her no reply. Far up the road, however, in the shade of the hill, he turned, and looked down at the cheerful lights and the motionless figure sitting again by the side of the current, her hands clasped about her knees, her eyes turned to the south. He watched her until the low moon showed him the strange strength in her tender face, and the uninterpreted meanings that in these later years spoke from it. Is it work she has found to do that daily gives to her fresh breaths of life from God? Will she some day be the stronger, more loving wife and mother because she has been one of God's helpers?

Or, is it that the dead speaks to her, and that she makes answer, as she will never do to his living love?

The little soldier draws a long, brave breath as he turns away. Come what may, what better thing is there for a manly man to do than to share in her despised work?

Broderip, in his grave yonder, has not saved his people from their balked, incomplete lives. The country which he and they have served is still silent, while they stand waiting its verdict. Does that mean that he, George Markle, in any village in America can to-day find Christ's very work to do; find His obloquy, and, in God's good time, His reward?

THE END.

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